







## THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

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# THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

BY  
FATHER HENRY RAMIÈRE  
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

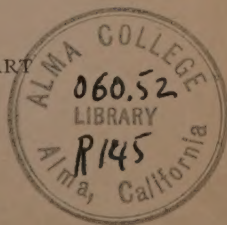
A NEW TRANSLATION,  
WITH NOTES, REFERENCE ANALYSES AND INDEX.

*I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men*

*I Timothy, ii. 1.*

PHILADELPHIA  
MESSENGER OF THE SACRED HEART  
114 South Third Street  
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BY REV. R. S. DEWEY, S. J.





THIS new translation of Father Ramière's great work is an endeavor to present, with strict faithfulness, the last thoughts of the author on the high questions treated. Thus whatever notes have been added are taken, for the most part, from his own later writings; and no omissions have been made in what is given. The entire third part of the original book had been materially changed during the author's lifetime, and all recent editions have been obliged to substitute quite different chapters, on account of the exigences of a work that has far outgrown, in its details, all that was foreseen by its founders. In this new translation it has been thought better to omit this part altogether, as it is found substantially in the *Handbook* of the League of the Sacred Heart.

Recent controversy has drawn the attention of minds to certain questions not uppermost when this book was written. A few annotations have been thought necessary on this account, and a single point, taken for granted by the author's Christian faith, has been treated anew in a brief appendix. These addi-

tions are in all cases carefully distinguished from the text of the author by means of brackets.

For the convenience of those who may desire to make use of the work for purposes of instruction or reference, each chapter has been prefaced by a careful analysis, indicating the principal ideas and the thread of their connection ; and with this correspond the headlines of pages. The venerated author's long experience in teaching and popularly explaining theology had already made his book a work of science as well as an eloquent exposition of religion. Besides the author's table of contents, it has been thought well to add an index of Scriptural texts and doctrinal points touched on in the course of his work, with references to corresponding passages in the Catechism of the Council of Trent. This will be of service, it is believed, to many, and will not interfere with interest on the part of the simple reader.

The work of Father Henry Ramière on the Apostleship of Prayer has been called 'epoch-making.' It is certainly one of the most noteworthy and lucid explanations of a part of the Christian religion that reaches furthest into the lives and inmost sympathies of men. It belongs to the line of works designed by their distinguished authors to popularize a science so remote from present tastes and interests as theology. Perhaps no publication of the kind ever obtained a wider success, and it is hard to conceive a time when

the social condition of the world will warrant its being put aside.

This book was written at the founding of an association that has since spread through the world under its name. It was further explained by the author's sub-title, "A League of Christian hearts united with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to obtain the salvation of the world and the triumph of the Church." A continued series of writings in many languages, in succession to this first classical work, has been made possible by the propagation of this League through the periodical *Messengers of the Sacred Heart*.

What is here given is the original work of Father Ramière in exposition of the religious doctrines which are at the basis of all Christian prayer and association and union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As such it has a perpetual interest for all who desire to know their religion, and especially for the members of the clergy and religious communities whose office it is to understand clearly, and to explain practically to others, the great duties which are not for time but for eternity.

The fitness of the author for his work may be seen from the briefest sketch of his life. His father was a judge at Castres, in France, where Henry was born on the 10th of July, 1821. His grandparents had suffered for the faith during the great French Revolution, and there was a tradition of lofty and

intelligent piety in this Christian family of the old school. The young boy was carefully educated in the Seminary of his native town, and afterward in a Jesuit college. At the age of seventeen he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus, for which his fervor as a sodalist of the Blessed Virgin, during his college life, seemed to mark him out. Besides the usual long training of the priests of his order, he had the advantage of following the special courses of the Sorbonne in eloquence. Ordained a priest in 1847, he was chosen for the Southern mission of the United States. To prepare himself rightly, he passed the four succeeding years in Stonyhurst College, England. There he taught theology and philosophy, until finally, instead of the missionary career of which he had dreamed, he was chosen to devote himself to the higher theology in his own country. In the Scholasticate of Vals, where the Apostleship of Prayer had its origin as an association at the hands of the saintly Father Gautrelet, he was engaged for many years in this higher religious teaching, which he afterward continued in the new Catholic University of Toulouse. He counted out his full score of years in this labor, at the same time constantly exercising his pen in works of controversy and devotion. It would seem that his career had been specially ordered by Divine Providence to prepare him for writing sublime and luminous expositions of the vital points of the Christian religion. The burning eloquence of his own words



shows how closely he had bound up with his science that earnest devotion which alone can win from the Holy Spirit the gift of teaching mankind.

It is now thirty years since the first edition of this truly great work was published. It immediately won a success all the more wonderful as its subject would seem to mark it out for scant popularity. On the 16th of April, 1862, Pius IX. bestowed his most special blessing in return for "the pleasure caused him by the zeal and tendency of the work." This was accompanied by brilliant testimonials of approbation from bishops and leading priests in the Church. Notable masters of the spiritual life and laymen engaged in the fierce onrush of Catholic controversy alike congratulated Father Ramière on the work he had produced.

The guide of his own mature spiritual life, Father Fouillot, who for years had trained the priests of the Society of Jesus in the ways of the spirit, wrote in exulting terms: "The work will make its way. Wheresoever it reaches it will bring forth apostolic fruit."

The intrepid controversialist, Louis Veuillot, turned aside from the dust and turmoil of his newspaper arena to write the following words;—"I read your book slowly, with much fruit and consolation. It is not a little thing for me to learn how to pray. If I make any progress in so necessary an art I shall

owe it to you, and you will not lose by it. I desire ardently that your book should be widely spread. It would make us at once humbler and higher-spirited, two things of which we stand greatly in need. In proportion as we penetrate into these mysteries of prayer we form to ourselves a vaster idea of God's infinite goodness, our own wretchedness becomes more apparent to us, and yet we are uplifted by it."

Still weightier words of encouragement came to him from a worthy Benedictine of Solesmes, a man known throughout the Church for his science and his piety. "It is a great misfortune for our times that the doctrines of religion are no longer explained after this fashion. Not only is the present generation deeply ignorant, but, what is more, because of this ignorance it wishes to learn nothing. It does not even come to mind to apply no matter how little attention when religion is spoken of. There is a desire only for vague commonplaces, for a faith built on air, and for sentimental emotions in which silliness and sensuality even have a good share, and from which the supernatural element disappears more and more. From this arise naturalism and the weakening of faith, and a vague religiousness that makes up the entire religion of a great number of worldly women, while the religion of the people is left more and more to superstition and mere words. Where is now the substantial and lofty teaching of the Fathers of the Church? Where are the scholastic and ascetic

writers of the Middle Ages? For Heaven's sake, then, do not give way before the unintelligent protestations that will be made to you, but follow out your sublime exposition of the doctrine of the Sacred Heart and of the communion of our souls in the same Christ."

On various occasions, Father Ramière summed up in burning words the doctrine which he had undertaken to set forth in the present work, and which, until the hour of his death, he endeavored strenuously to bring into practice by his direction of the League of the Sacred Heart.

"The fundamental thought of the Apostleship is to blend with all our own sentiments those of Jesus Christ. They who strive to realize this in all its fulness know that, in the supernatural order far more than in the order of nature, strength comes from union, and they unite themselves closely together in order to promote more efficaciously this Apostleship, and along with it every other work which serves to God's glory.

"It is not hard to understand the priceless advantages which cannot but result from such a union, of which the love of the Heart of Jesus is the bond and the desires of that Divine Heart the rule, and its end and aim His glory, while His almighty power is its prop and stay" (*Messenger*, 1862, vi.).

"The Apostleship of Prayer is, in substance, nothing else than the reproducing in ourselves of the

interior life of Jesus Christ, which the Venerable Olier looked upon as the very essence of the Christian and priestly life" (*id.*, xvi.).

And again (1861, 71): "Some time or other, in the silence of the sanctuary, you have listened with attentive ear to the speech of the Heart of Jesus. It cannot be that you have not heard Him saying to you, from the depths of His tabernacle, these burning words: *I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?* Oh, thought of sorrow! thousands, millions rather of pious Christians daily receive into their breast this Heart of infinite love, this Fire of divine charity. Then they go forth into the world, to mingle there with Christians who are indifferent, with heretics, with unbelievers. Ought not they to spread around them these flames, and enkindle the coldest hearts with the love of their God?"

The method of his writings Father Ramière has himself well expressed (*Messenger*, 1877, I. 504):

"The theology of St. Paul is nothing else than a lofty exposition of the union of God's Spirit with the soul of the Christian. He shows us the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul as in Its temple, making it live a divine life, giving it strength to strive against the inclinations of the flesh, communicating to it a wisdom infinitely higher than the wisdom of this world. The Holy Spirit inspires the soul with the sentiments of Jesus Christ, kindling in it the flames



of divine charity, praying in the soul and teaching it to call upon God with the love of a child, depositing in it the seed of eternal life and becoming to the soul the pledge of divine blessedness."

From the foundation of the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* in June, 1861, until his death, Father Ramière was actively engaged in directing the work which, more than any other, he was to help to spread through the entire world. He lived to see a score of editions of the periodical organ of the League appearing in nearly a dozen different languages. Meanwhile he was teaching as before, preaching and writing in reviews, making himself remarked at the Vatican Council, of which he was a theologian, for his fiery zeal in obtaining the consecration of the dioceses of the universal Church to the Sacred Heart—always compressing into his own one life the work of several apostolic laborers. On the 3d of January—the eve of the First Friday of 1884—he at last ceased from labor, dying in the peace of the Sacred Heart.

Father Ramière had *instructed many to justice* : may the reward also be his—to *shine as stars to all eternity* (Daniel, xii. 3).

R. S. DEWEY, S. J.

*Feast of St. Leo the Great, 1889.*

*I desire therefore first of all that supplications,  
prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for  
all men: . . .*

*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of  
God our Saviour,*

*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come  
to the knowledge of the truth.*

*For there is one God, and one Mediator of God  
and men, the Man Christ Jesus:*

*Who gave Himself a redemption for all.*

*(I Timothy, ii.)*

## INTRODUCTION.

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ANALYSIS. I. [General principle for answering difficulties against religion; particular answer regarding the grace sufficient for salvation, given to all men.] The mystery, seemingly scant fruit from Incarnation—a favorite blasphemy of infidels. 1st answer from St. Paul. His 2d answer the ground of this work, aiming practically at Christians praying for the salvation of all men as a prime duty. The Apostle's line of argument: God wishes the salvation of all men, seriously, but not without their free co-operation.

II. 1st conclusion: a world not Christian *in opposition with God's will*. Calvin's blasphemous imputation to God. Jesus Christ nothing, or the universal Saviour; His teaching in the Samaritan city. Not the design of Providence to save men without co-operation—the twofold Apostleship, of the Word and of Prayer. Examples: the Blessed Virgin and St. John at the foot of the Cross—the reason for the Church's being—the mission of the Apostles. This 1st lesson of St. Paul refutes Calvin.

III. 2d conclusion: actual state of the world *from the free will of man*. Nature of God's co-operation with man's free will—the latter can refuse to carry out God's first design. Example, our Lord and Judas—the final triumph of God's glory—application to all men. St. Augustine on St. Paul, grace given to every man. God's mercy with many has ways mysterious to us, to be known at the last day—meanwhile graces given to others to be reckoned from our own. This 2d lesson of St. Paul, absolutely, is sufficient to answer the infidel.

IV. 3d conclusion, further condition laid down by Apostle, the duty of praying for all men because God wishes the salvation of all: hence, salvation depends on the free will of the one to be saved, *but also on the zeal of others already in the way of salvation.* An instance of the great law of human society, *mutual influence.* Example from the material universe, application to the moral world. Without this law, no true society, no real manifestation of the ineffable society of the Trinity. Essential relations of society with this law: God's impulsion of the moral world—man's co-operation an essential condition—man's power of resistance: hence, mutual dependence in the moral world. God's providing for each one in essentials not done away with—mutual influence adds superabundant means.

This law a view of charity according to St. Peter—an obligation on all. Admission of this law resolves the entire problem: the world not yet Christian, not because of any plan on the part of God, [nor because of lack of sufficient grace given to each soul]; but because of lack of co-operation with God's designs on the part of Christians. Examples: the Church, her entire work in this co-operation; children of the Church not faithful, Arius, Luther, Calvin, Voltaire—counter-examples, Sts. Vincent de Paul, Teresa, Xavier; present unbelieving philosophers, what if Christian? Not only extraordinary men bound to this co-operation, but result chiefly to be expected from the great number—all men have this vocation—Providence relies on the zeal and prayers of common Christians—glorious results wherever this is realized. This the chief co-operation asked by the Heart of Jesus—to explain this the object of this book.



## I.

[The author, with the frankness of a Christian whose faith is complete and fearless, puts forth from the start one of the most striking difficulties of our religion. It is true this difficulty arises chiefly in imaginations sensitive to the attacks of the enemies of the Church. As put forward by the author it is fully answered in the succeeding pages—fully, that is, for the intellect. But the sensitive imagination may need to be turned aside to other considerations, when charges are so recklessly made against the holiness and goodness of God by modern infidels. It is well, therefore, to add to the general answer made by St. Paul and quoted by our author, the broad principle laid down by Cardinal Newman: A hundred difficulties do not make one doubt; also the sensible remark of an English priest who had received into the Church a notable number of converts: To every objection there is somewhere an answer.]

Besides this summary way of dismissing the difficulty, the ordinary teaching of the Church, when properly stated, gives entire satisfaction to the mind. God, in one way or another—how it matters not—gives to every man who has the use of reason a light and strength of grace sufficient for him to save his soul, *if he will*. This is the answer St. Teresa was used to make to herself when she found her imagination weighed down by the sad state of the world such as it must always appear in our narrow and incomplete knowledge of things: No one has ever been condemned unless he willed it, that is, by deliberate and mortal sin. Once this truth is firmly grasped the soul may go safely on to consider how far a more than sufficient, a superabundant grace may be obtained for men by the apostolic and united prayers of Christians. This latter question, in its fulness,

is considered by the author. He too addresses himself to the imagination and heart of the Christian, but chiefly to reason enlightened by faith.]

In the ways of God's Providence there is one mystery, if there is any, that is enough to disturb both the heart and the reason of man. It is the small number of the elect, the seeming barrenness of fruit of the Incarnation and of the sweat and blood of the Son of God.

How are we to explain the relative uselessness of the Precious Blood which was shed in torrents? A single drop should have been more than enough to save a thousand worlds. How are we to recognize the action of Supreme Wisdom amid the confusion of monstrous errors, of gross vices, of impure and bloody religions? In the constant strife of passion and self-interest against principle and duty it is the latter that are wellnigh always vanquished. How is it possible for us not to stand in amazement? The God Who shows Himself so generous to the meanest creatures, Who gives to the flower of the field the drop of dew that it may bloom and to the little ones of the raven their food, leaves so great a number of reasonable beings without the bread of truth, without the refreshing dew of the hopes of heaven.

We must acknowledge it—this pitiful state of things is in sad contrast with the touching pictures given us in Holy Scripture of God's mercy, with that boundless love for men which brought the Son of Man down to earth and to the death of the cross.

As a weapon in its attack on Providence, impiety delights in making use of these incomplete results of the mission of the Incarnate Word. It is one of the favorite themes of its blasphemy, one of the points on which it relies with most success, for shaking the faith of weak or ignorant Christians.

What answer shall we make to its scoffs? Shall we remain mute before accusations that aim at nothing less than convicting Supreme Wisdom of having failed in the most perfect of Its works? Shall we seem to acknowledge by our silence that God, Whose very essence is His goodness, Who has shown forth His goodness with so great profusion in senseless creatures, has failed in regard to the only beings able to respond to His love?

God forbid we should be brought to so sad a necessity!

To these impious blasphemies we can, first of all, give an answer that admits of no reply. It is furnished us by the Apostle, when he exclaims: *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God.*<sup>1</sup> What are we, to pretend to comprehend with our weak minds His incomprehensible judgments, to penetrate by our shifty reasonings into His impenetrable ways? Could God be the Infinite One if an understanding so limited as ours were able to enter into all His designs? Do we dare to make ourselves His counsellors, when day by day we stand con-

<sup>1</sup> Romans, xi. 33.

founded by the genius or the cleverness of our fellows? *Who hath forwarded the spirit of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor and hath taught Him?*<sup>2</sup>

This first reply is enough to confound the pride of human reason. It is the only one it deserves to receive, perhaps it is the best that could be made to it.

But for the humility of the Christian heart which studies the designs of its God, not to sit in judgment on them but to fulfil them, faith has in store another answer as salutary as it is satisfactory. This answer will serve as a foundation to all the practical considerations developed in this work. It is found, implicitly, in the words of the Apostle which appear on our title-page.

*I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men: . . .*

*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,*

*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

*For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus:*

*Who gave Himself a redemption for all.*<sup>3</sup>

These words comprehend three points. First, there is the Apostle's aim in practice, that Christians

<sup>2</sup> Isaias, xl. 13; Romans, xi. 34; Wisdom, ix. 13.

<sup>3</sup> I Timothy, ii. 1-6.

should pray for the salvation of all men. Then he sets this duty before them as one of the very *first of all*. And he attaches so great importance to this observation that he is not content with pointing out their duty to them; he persuades, he *desires* them to apply themselves to it with all their strength. It is not a feeble or passing prayer that he so earnestly desires to see us sending up to God. It is a repeated entreaty, fervent, without ceasing, taking on itself every form that prayer can have, *supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings*. The Apostle speaks as do all those who are pierced through by some great thought and swayed by its masterful feeling. He heaps together like expressions and exhausts Christian speech, as if no words were enough to tell the importance and the extent of this duty which he desires to impress on us. This, once more, is his practical aim. It is also the aim which this book sets before itself, and the reader is already in a state to appreciate its importance.

Most of all at this period of our work, if we are to clear up the frightful problem which we have to face, there is grave need of understanding well the reason on which the Apostle bases this great duty of prayer for the salvation of all our brethren. He says: *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. And then, as if to anticipate the doubt and the distrust which the

feeling of his unworthiness causes to spring up in the heart of man, the Apostle gives us in a few words the most striking proofs of his comforting assertion. He tells us *there is one God*; and this God being the Creator and Master of all men cannot but wish the happiness of his privileged creature. *There is one Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ*, by nature the Son of God, and become the Son of Man by His own free choice; having taken us for His brethren He must also have taken on Himself the obligation of reconciling us with God His Father. Finally, this Divine Mediator *gave Himself a redemption for all*; and for the salvation of all He has paid ransom superabundantly. The love of God the Father for His Son is infinite; and now that He has given Him to us as our Brother and our Saviour, now that He has accepted His blood as a ransom for the crimes of all men, how can He do else than wish the salvation of these men who are thus become His children?

This is the line of argument of St. Paul. Everyone at first sight will grasp the resistless strength with which it holds together. It will be quite as easy for us to draw from it the explanation of the actual state of the world and of the great mystery of Providence.

For this purpose let us consider with a little more attention the different parts of the Apostle's discourse; from the relation they bear to each other



the explanation we seek will be clearly seen. He tells us we must pray without ceasing for the salvation of all men, because God, Who has created all and has given to all His Son as their Saviour, desires the salvation of all equally. But with what will does God desire the salvation of all men? Doubtless, it is a will serious and real; it would be blasphemous to suppose an insincere will in God. Does it follow that this will of His is so absolute, so efficacious, that its execution is not left to the free co-operation of His creatures? Clearly not; for if God willed our salvation in this way He would work it out alone, not waiting for our prayers. By the fact that the Apostle makes God's will the reason of praying for its execution, we are taught that the salvation of the world is one of those works in which God asks and waits for the co-operation of His creatures. This evidently is the sense of the Apostle's words. To understand them otherwise would be to take from them all their meaning, and to make of them, instead of a reasoning as natural as it is solid, a series of incoherent propositions without any real sense.

This is the clearing up of the mystery, and at the same time the revelation to us of our most glorious duty; this too must result from those evident conclusions to which the Apostle's reasoning will lead us.

## II.

The first conclusion we should draw is this :

If the world is not yet Christian, if the great number of peoples, instead of walking in the way of light that leads to the mountain of Sion, wretchedly drag themselves along the miry roads of error and of vice, this pitiful state is so far from being the outcome of God's designs that it is, on the contrary, in open opposition with His will.

The Apostle proves this truth to us in the manner most convincing ; to doubt it would require us to renounce our reason as men and our faith as Christians as well. No man, unless passion sways him, can persuade himself that the wretched state to which we see a great part of mankind reduced can come from any design of God. For thus God, without other motive than that of using His all-powerful will, would refuse to a great number of His reasonable creatures the means of knowing and serving Him.

Calvin dared to think this. He did not fear to say that, simply through His good pleasure, God has given up the greater number of men to damnation. But the common sense of mankind has treated this blasphemy as it deserved, and even the disciples of the blasphemer have entered their protests against it. Really, we cannot but understand that, if God is free to create or not to create, it is a necessity for

Him to give the beings He creates an end worthy of Himself and according to their own nature. He would be wanting at once in wisdom, in justice, and in goodness, if He gave His reasonable creatures faculties that might reach the Infinite, along with a measureless need of happiness, and at the same time denied them the means absolutely necessary for gaining this only and essential object of their aspirations. If the errors and the crimes of men were the outcome of the wilful design of God, God Himself would be responsible for them. Consequently, He would cease to be holy, to be true, to be God; and evil would no longer be evil.

This our created reason easily discerns. But God Himself has made it known to us most touchingly, by the mouth of His Son, Who is His Word in the same Substance as Himself and His Uncreated Reason. This desire for our salvation has passed from all eternity from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of the Son. It is the divine seed, and the blessed fruit it has brought forth is the Incarnation. To doubt that God wishes the salvation of all men is to doubt not only the wisdom and the goodness of Jesus Christ, but even His existence. For Jesus Christ is nothing, or else He is the only and universal Saviour.

In fact, what is the whole Gospel other than the expression of this will? We find it on every page; it is enough to cite a single instance.

One day our Divine Saviour had wearied Himself without seeming aim. After a long journey He was come, toward the hour of noon, to the neighborhood of an unbelieving city. There He stayed His steps beside a well; and His disciples, seeing Him worn out with fatigue and hunger, went into the city to seek refreshment for Him. On their return they found Him speaking to an unbelieving woman, whose mind He had enlightened and whose heart He had healed, by means the most considerate and merciful.

Master, they said to Him, take this food, of which You stand in need. I have other food, replied the Saviour, which your eyes as yet know not how to discern. And as they were astonished He added, My food is to do the will of My Father and to save souls. Behold these fields, covered with the fair growing crops. In three months, you say, the harvest-time will come. Ah, lift your eyes higher and behold, far away, how the whole world is but one vast field already ripe to the harvest. This field I am to sow in My tears. But to you and your successors I leave the joy of the harvest. For it is a true word—one is he that soweth, another he that reapeth; and the labor is shared, that one day there may be joy in common.<sup>4</sup>

In such teaching Jesus Christ unfolds to us His Father's will, and the only aim of the mission He

<sup>4</sup>St. John, iv.

Himself has received from the Father, and the cause of the seeming want of success of His mission. To save souls, to bring back to the fold the wandering sheep, to bring home again all God's children scattered through the wilderness of this world, to spread the fire broadcast over the earth and utterly enkindle it with the flames of the love of God—this was the object of His desire, the work He had unceasingly before His eyes, to the fulfilment of which He sacrificed Himself without reserve. But it was not in the designs of Providence that He should accomplish this work by Himself alone. There must be others to work along with Him, and these co-workers He shall not find so long as He is on the earth. The food for which He hungers none will give Him. Lifted up on the Cross—the altar of His sacrifice—He looks out upon the earth and finds few souls that do not withstand all the attraction of His love. He leaves the earth with a cry of distress from His mercy poured out in vain—*I thirst.*

This thirst for the salvation of all men the Church—there on Calvary in the persons of Mary and John and the Holy Women—will take to herself as her dearest inheritance. And to the successors of St. John and the Holy Women she will transmit it, that is, to the twofold apostleship which, until the end, shall share the fulfilling of the work of Jesus Christ—the priesthood of office and the priesthood of zeal, the apostleship of the word and the apostleship of prayer.

God's will that all men be saved is therefore the Church's reason for existence, as it was the reason why Jesus Christ existed. In truth, Jesus Christ sent His Apostles as the Father had sent Him, with the same power, but also with the same end in view. He knows there is no other name than His in which the world, both the peoples and the individuals who compose it, can be saved. He has said that He is the corner stone, that all which is not built up on Him is doomed to be overthrown. He is the way, and by no other can anyone draw near to His Father and reach the final rest of life everlasting. He is the vine, and all that brings not forth fruit in Him is to be cast into the fire. Therefore He sends His Apostles to the ends of the earth, that they may bring all men to Him.

*And He said to them : Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.*<sup>5</sup>

Again He says to them : *Stay you in the city until you be endued with power from on high.*<sup>6</sup> Then go forth, and you shall be witnesses unto Me, not only in Jerusalem and Samaria, but *even to the uttermost part of the earth.*<sup>7</sup>

Now we can see : to deny that God wills seriously the salvation of all the world and of each man, to endeavor to cast back on Him the responsibility

<sup>5</sup> St. Mark, xvi. 15, 16. <sup>6</sup> St. Luke, xxiv. 49. <sup>7</sup> Acts, i. 8.



for the darkness that covers the great part of nations, is to deny the existence of the Church and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, it is to deny all reason and God Himself.

This is the first lesson given us by St. Paul. It is not sufficient to resolve the sorrowful problem before us; it is only enough to set finally aside the hateful imaginings of Calvin. But the whole question still remains behind. If it is not to the original design of Providence that we are to attribute the actual state of the world and the loss of so many millions of souls, to what shall we assign it?

## III.

The answer at once presents itself, it is naturally suggested by the Apostle's words. It is drawn from the *liberty of man*.

We have said that the words of St. Paul would bear no explanation, if there was question of God's will, absolute and efficacious and to be carried out of necessity. In such a case no co-operation is asked apart from that of blind and inert causes. God commands the sun to give light, the rain to fall, the plant to bud forth; and the sun shines, the rain falls, the plant buds, because neither the sun, the rain, nor the plant have any will which they can oppose to God's will. This is not the case with man. Man is free, and the fearful privilege of his liberty is precisely in this: he can at will co-operate with God's designs or resist them, fulfil or frustrate the Divine will. It is true, he shall never overcome the Almighty; he shall never prevent God from attaining His own ends, even through man's resistance. But it is none the less true that he can refuse his co-operation with God's original design and render ineffective a very serious will of his Sovereign Lord.

Jesus Christ willed very seriously to touch the heart of Judas, when, in the Garden of Olives, He made him this affectionate reproach: *Friend, whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man*

*with a kiss ?*<sup>8</sup> But Judas was free to resist. He was pleased to use for his ruin the freedom which would have given its entire merit to his repentance. Here then our Saviour's desire was really frustrated. No doubt Judas could not prevent his treason's turning to the glory of his Master, nor its being as helpful to our own salvation as his conversion would have been. This is the triumph of Divine Wisdom. But Judas really put an obstacle in the way of the fulfilment of God's designs on himself.

Let us apply this, though in different measure, to all men. We shall then understand how it is possible that God should very seriously wish all men to be saved, and yet, after so many centuries, the greater number are still out of the way of salvation.

It is thus Augustine, Saint and Doctor, explains the Apostle's words: "Yes, God wishes all men to be saved, He wishes them all to come to the knowledge of the truth. But, however serious and sincere this will may be, it does not destroy the free will of those it seeks to save."<sup>9</sup> All men, without exception, at certain critical moments of their life, hear the voice of their Father resounding in the depths of their soul and calling them to Himself in heaven. But it will always be in their power to remain deaf to the call, and to refuse to allow them-

<sup>8</sup> St. Matthew, xxvi. 50; St. Luke, xxii. 48.

<sup>9</sup> De Spiritu et Littera, xxxiii.

selves to be led by it.<sup>10</sup> All shall have their *day of salvation*, but not all will profit by it.<sup>11</sup> All shall feel themselves drawn to truth and goodness, not all will give themselves up to God Who draws them. Most of all since the Incarnation of the Saviour, has light living and plentiful been shed over the world. St. Augustine tells us once again: "Since the Sun of Truth has risen above the horizon, no longer can man rightly cast off on the darkness which surrounds him the responsibility for his wanderings."<sup>12</sup>

For the greater number of men, it is true, we cannot possibly find out the mysterious ways by which the Divine Mercy comes to them: their resistance wipes out every trace. Only at the great day of revelation shall we know the secrets of that inner striving of grace, of the work of God in souls that seemed the most forsaken by Him. He would be indeed rash and guilty who should bring forward, as an accusation against God's Mercy, the very resistance which men show to His endeavors, and the care they take to stifle His loving pleadings. Let a man be only sincere with himself, and he will see that if he is not a Christian and a perfect Christian it is not the fault of grace. Then let him judge others by him-

<sup>10</sup> Compare St. John, xl. 45-6: [of the Jews who witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus, *many believed in Him—but some of them went to the Pharisees.*]

<sup>11</sup> II Corinthians, vi. 2.

<sup>12</sup> In Psalm, xviii. 7.

self, and not push his folly and injustice so far as to pretend to extenuate the known crime of his own rebellion by the supposed innocence of the rebellion of another.

This is the second teaching we can draw from the words of St. Paul. Strictly speaking, it is enough to solve our problem, and to vindicate God's Justice and reduce the unbeliever to silence.

## IV.

Yet, let us acknowledge it, this answer does not give entire satisfaction to the instincts of our faith. In the presence of the wonders of Calvary and the Passion of a God dead to save all men, the Christian heart remains filled with sadness at the sight of so many victims of ignorance and error and corruption. We ask ourselves once again how it is that the wishes of the Son of God expiring on the cross have been till now so imperfectly realized. How is it that so many souls created in the image of the Trinity and redeemed by the blood of the Saviour remain strangers to this plentiful redemption, and have not more abundant means of salvation?

In this sorrowful perplexity let us again have recourse to God's Apostle. He will lead us to understand yet another condition which has been wanting until now to the entire fulfilment of the work of the Saviour. To realize it more faithfully would bring about the salvation of the world.

In fact, what is it he tells us? That we should pray for all our brethren, because God wishes the salvation of all. What other meaning can this have than that the fulfilment of God's merciful will does not depend solely on the free co-operation of those it seeks to save? It depends also on the zeal, the



prayers, the endeavors of those who are already in the way of salvation ; it is they whom God calls to lead back their brethren. This is the final explanation of the pitiful state of the world ; it is also the secret of its future salvation.

To understand both the one and the other, and to penetrate fully the thought of St. Paul we must go back to a sovereign law. This law, however mysterious it may seem when looked at in itself, is nothing less than the essential foundation of all human society. It is the only possible explanation of the great problems of the moral order. This law we take upon ourselves to call, in the lack of some settled name, the law of *Mutual Influence*.\*

A glance at the material world may teach us the nature of this law. Our reason tells us that God is the first and the universal Cause of whatever exists and is done in the world, that not an atom may stir unless it has its movement from Him. And yet, wherever we turn our eyes, we can nowhere discern any trace of the immediate action of the Creator. Everywhere it is bodies that move other bodies. The sun attracts the earth ; and, in its turn, the earth attracts the bodies upon its surface. Water revives

\* The former translation made use of the term *reciprocity* ; but this in its proper meaning does not square with Father Ramière's explanation of *mutualité*, for which indeed he himself substituted at times the words we have chosen. *Mutual dependence* expresses only a part of the law.

plant-life, and plants give to man his food. It is light that shines upon him, water that refreshes him, fire that warms him. Thus God does everything, and He does nothing alone. His activity, which alone would surely be enough to reach from one extremity to the other, awaits the co-operation of His creatures, in order to put forth and communicate itself. And from this results the whole order of the visible world. For if God acted quite alone, if by Himself He brought every one of His creatures to its own special end, there would no longer be a bond of union among them, there would be no order and no *universe*.

Thus the physical order altogether rests upon the mutual action of bodies on each other. The wondrous harmony that rules it is only the result of the faithfulness with which each one of the bodies which compose it transmits to other bodies the movement it has received.

It is not otherwise with the moral world. The conditions of its existence and of its harmony are quite the same. Here too there would be no bond, no union, and consequently no order, if the free wills, which are its elements, could reach their end and gain their perfect happiness independently of each other. Men would no longer owe anything to their fellow-men, and would have nothing to expect from them. They would pass by as strangers who know each other not. Charity, devotedness, abne-

gation, and so many other virtues which are the glory of our nature, could no longer be practised. There would be no more society, for society is only a collection of free beings bound to help each other to some common end. That is, God's most beautiful work—that which most perfectly represents, by its unity and variety, by its end and action, the ineffable society of the Three Divine Persons—would have ceased to exist.

This is what we understand by the law of Mutual Influence; this is our meaning when we say that all human society rests on this great law.

Between society and this law there is an essential relation. The possibility of society results from the power which souls have of acting on each other, according to the degree of authority, perfection, and energy with which they are endowed. The existence of society is the result of the obligation incumbent on them to help each other. Finally, the harmony of society is measured by the faithfulness with which this duty is fulfilled, and by the constancy with which each soul communicates to those coming after it the movement it has received from the Prime Mover.

Assuredly too, in the moral even more than in the physical order, God is the principle of all movement, of all life, and of all good. He gives the impulse to every will, and acts in every soul. He reaches from end to end of the moral universe; He takes the guilty and degraded soul in the depths of

its sin, and leads it to the loftiest height of perfection and happiness. But although He acts everywhere He acts nowhere alone. He wishes His creatures to share in His action, as they share in His being. Save in those rare circumstances where His Wisdom demands that He shall show forth the almightiness of His arm, He subordinates His own action to the co-operation of secondary causes. From this strict bond of union, from this constant dependence in which created beings stand with regard to each other, results their perfect unity in the midst of boundless variety. From this, too, it comes that the moral creation, much more than the physical creation, is the image of the Creator and the mirror of His Divine Beauty.

Indeed, it must be plain to all that the power given to free causes to co-operate in the execution of God's designs in the moral order, as necessary causes co-operate with them in the physical order, is not only the essential condition of the existence of society and of God's glory in the world, but it is also the chief title of our own glory. By it we can acquire the right to be remembered by our Creator, and we draw nearer and nearer to His Divine likeness.

But remark with care, that a power like this of freely co-operating in God's work involves also, of necessity, the power of going against it. When the Almighty subordinates the execution of His own

plans to the co-operation of our wills, He must consent to have them impeded by our resistance. The co-operation He allows us to give Him would be an illusion, if when we grant it we can expect no result that would not be quite as secure in case of our denying it. Clearly there would no longer be mutual dependence, which is the same as to say, there would no longer be any society. What would become of the duties of paternity, if a father were sure that the completest forgetfulness of duty on his part would bring about no harm to his children? What motive could we have to labor for others, if we could procure them no advantage which they would not possess quite as well without us?

It is now evident that this law of mutual influence, this dependence in which men stand toward each other, this power they have of communicating or refusing to each other the advantages of the moral order, is like a double-edged sword. Rather, it is like the weapon which mythology gave Achilles; it has alike the power of wounding and of healing. The day we came into human society found us clothed with the power of bringing our fellow-men nearer to God, or of driving them from Him. A philosopher has said that not an atom is set in motion in the universe without a consequent movement being felt to the farthest extremities of space. This may be difficult to conceive in the physical order, but it is an evident truth in the moral order. We are bound to

our fellow-men by continual relations, seen or unseen ; and we cease not to depend on them as they depend unceasingly on us. We can increase, beyond all reckoning, their means of salvation ; but we can also diminish them to a degree beyond all our power to determine.

Without doubt, God can refuse to no free will the strictly necessary means for avoiding evil and doing good. He is obliged to furnish, as we have already said, such means that even men the most abandoned by their fellow-men may have them at their disposition, at least during certain periods of their passage on the earth. But it is not the same with the superabundant means of salvation brought down to men by the Incarnate Word. Providence, Which does all things with order and weight and measure, demands that these shall be given, for the most part, only *in society*, that is, only by the free co-operation of their brother-men.

Besides, when looked at in its right light, this law of mutual influence is simply one side of the great law of Charity, in which the whole moral order is summed up. *Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves*, St. Peter tells us.<sup>13</sup> This precept is addressed to all men. All, without any exception, are in duty bound mutually to wish each other good. But why, unless because they are able to do real good to each other? God cannot

<sup>13</sup> I. iv. 8.

oblige us to what is impossible, and the first of the commandments cannot be a mere barren precept. Therefore we can do good to each other, from the fact that we are in duty bound to wish good to each other. But the further fact that we are free to fulfil this duty shows too that we are able to deny our fellows that good which they have a right to expect from us. Even we can do them evil.

Once the law of mutual influence is granted, the great problem we have set before ourselves can no longer give us any difficulty.

The universe is not yet Christian. There are so many peoples as yet imperfectly sharing in the fruits of the Incarnation. True, but it is not in God's plan that they should be shut out from this banquet which His Wisdom has prepared for all men. It is because the Divine Wisdom has not found, in those who were first called, a co-operation devoted enough to pass on to their less fortunate brethren the advantages they themselves enjoy. It is true the Church has never ceased to proclaim this great duty. She could not do so without being false to the mission she has received, in one of its most essential portions. To every generation of her children she repeats over and over the bidding of the Apostle; again and again she renews his urgent entreaties. When she bestows on her ministers the priestly character she recalls to them that, together with the obligation of feeding the faithful sheep, is joined the duty



of bringing back the wanderers to the fold. She has never suffered them to forget that the whole world has been given as an inheritance to her Divine Spouse, and her duty is to bring Him into possession of His inheritance.

Much indeed is wanting in order that the Church's recommendations be carried out as fully as might be, and that the power of giving life to souls be actively exercised by each of those in whose hands such power ought to produce the most wonderful effects. The Church has not ceased to labor and to pray for the salvation of souls. But how many, among her own children, have refused to unite their labors with her labors and their prayers with her prayers! On the contrary, how many on whom have been bestowed the highest gifts of genius and strength and authority, will not understand the obligation, incumbent on them from their high standing, to co-operate more fully in God's work; but instead they choose to use for the ruin of their fellow-men the very faculties received for his salvation! A still greater number, with less brilliant qualities, take no care to make them of any use; they believe they do enough for God and society when they do not, like the others, turn the talents given them into instruments of ruin. The cause of God and of souls has been unworthily betrayed by His servants, at the very time it was attacked by His enemies. Yes, this is why the world is not yet Christian, why it is still

so far from being so. This is why, out of a thousand millions of men inhabiting the earth, more than half know not the Saviour. It is because those who have known Him hitherto have not understood as they ought the power and the obligation which they all have of passing on the light to others. It is because they have not taken seriously to heart the weighty words which sum up all their social duties: *God gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor.*<sup>14</sup>

This truth becomes apparent by an example. Let us take three or four of the men whose influence over the destinies of mankind has been at once the most powerful and the most pernicious, such as Arius, Luther, Calvin, Voltaire. Let us ask ourselves what would be the actual state of the world if these men had consecrated to the service of mankind the talents and influence which they so unhappily prostituted to the spread of error. Let us picture to ourselves Luther, with his strong imagination, his ardent soul, and the attractive impetuosity of his speech, traversing Germany to awaken the people from their slumbers, to draw the clergy from its ignorance, and everywhere to work the true reform of public morals. Imagine, in one word, Luther understanding and fulfilling his mission in the sixteenth century as St. Francis of Assisi understood his mission in the twelfth. Suppose, too, that like a new St. Dominic

<sup>14</sup> Ecclesiasticus, xviii. 12.

or a new St. Louis, Calvin and Henry VIII., in France and in England, had, for the same cause, used the means at their disposal. What good fortune for the Church, what a force for bringing into her bosom all the new peoples which daring discoverers were daily making known !

But let us now make quite another supposition. Let us take those vessels of election, those souls of heroes who gave themselves up without any reserve to the action of grace, suffering it to work in them and through them great things—a Vincent de Paul, a Teresa, a Xavier. If they had refused to divine charity that co-operation which in reality they so generously gave it, how much less to-day would be the sum total of good upon the earth ! For notice well, the sum total of good would not only have been lessened by the immediate fruits of their labors, but by the fruits far more considerable which were borne by those whom they left behind them. Who can state the full outcome, direct or remote, of the action of these great Saints ? Who can reckon the spiritual posterity to which their speech, their labors, their prayers, their examples have given the life of grace ? Who can measure the immense void in the hosts of the elect, if instead of becoming heroic chiefs these had turned out raging foes ?

Alas, we cannot put aside a thought of bitterness ! There are proud men of science who set up their vain systems in opposition to the teachings of

the Church, and make of the number of souls still in error a subject of accusation against the truth. How many of these philosophers, perhaps, might have been other Xaviers, destined by God to become, for their own glory and the salvation of their brethren, a living refutation of such sophisms !

But we ought not to forget that, not to extraordinary men alone, has the power been given of helping on or impeding the plans of God. This power belongs in some degree to every man, no matter how weak or obscure he may be. All are bound to help in their own measure to the salvation of the world. Their influence will not be exercised like that of a Xavier, with the force of a headlong torrent dragging everything along with it on its way ; but it will at least be like one of those drops of rain that fall one after the other on a day of storm, and end by causing the rivers to leave their banks and to overflow the country round. It is the unfaithfulness, then, of a great number of Christians who pass their lives in selfishness and ease, quite as much as the cowardly refusal of a few great souls, to which we must assign the partial inutility of the Church's efforts to save the world. Chosen souls will never be wanting in a society of which the great mass is on fire with zeal. The enkindling of great numbers makes heroes to start forth ; and the great deeds of heroes, backed by the less brilliant courage of other soldiers, are God's means for the salvation of nations.

Perhaps you who read these lines have never even dreamed that you were clothed with the power of saving the souls of your brethren, that you were called to become the helper and co-worker of your God. Yet nothing is more real than this high apostolic calling, which cannot be separated from your calling as a Christian. I do not know in what measure Providence designs that you should help in this great work. I do not know if you are to be like the rapid river of which the Prophet speaks; proceeding from beneath the threshold of God's house, it soon spread over the plain and brought into bloom, along both its banks, a forest of majestic trees. Perhaps you are rather to be like the dewdrop which God sends down, in the midst of the wilderness, on some plant unheeded of men. But, whether brilliant or whether lowly, your calling is certain, you are not destined to save yourself alone. You must not be in heaven without children; for it is written of the flock of the Good Shepherd—He has *no sheep barren among them*.<sup>15</sup> You too must share in the blessings promised to the man who fears the Lord: on the day of the eternal banquet he shall see *children as olive plants, round about his table*.<sup>16</sup> *And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor*,<sup>17</sup> not according to ability, nor to the natural fruitfulness of a man's will, but according to the

<sup>15</sup> Canticles, iv. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Psalm cxxvii. 3.

<sup>17</sup> I Corinthians, iii. 8.

humility and prayer that accompany seeming barrenness. This I know full well, this I believe firmly, because the Spirit of truth tells me so ; and you too cannot doubt it, since you as well as I give ear to the consoling utterance.

On you then God's Providence relies to defend His cause, to give back answer to the blasphemies of impiety, by acts far more eloquent than all words. It is for you to prove that, if the world unto this day has been so evil and souls have been so sick, it is not because God has no serious will to save the world and because the blood of Jesus Christ is lacking in virtue to heal the wounds of souls ; but it is solely because God will not save men without men, and because it has pleased Him Who alone is the universal Saviour by His own power, to grant to subordinate saviours the merits and the glories of His redemption.

How beautiful a day shall shine upon the world when this design is understood ; when all the chosen souls to whom God has given in higher degree so sublime a calling, in the midst of a society sunk in disorder and confusion, shall be what, in the world's first days, were those living germs which the Word of God had hidden in the bosom of inert matter ; when they shall place all their influence at the service of the Life Which has chosen them as Its instruments, and shall draw all that surrounds them to themselves, transforming by their warmth of zeal the most hardened elements and spreading from

neighbor to neighbor the divine contagion of good, and making to disappear before the fruit-bearing heat of their charity the ice of selfishness and the barrenness of its too long winter. Would not this be a new creation? But on what does it depend that a creation, so long promised, begins not at once? Society is deluged with errors and with vices. Is it because the Spirit of God does not brood over the muddy waters as in the first days of the world? Ah, if the Spirit found Its instruments, how blessedly would It show forth that Its power is ever the same, that Its fruitfulness has suffered no decline! Will you not hearken to It conjuring you to give back Its glory?

And now, what shall be your answer? Will not you follow this glorious calling? Will you suffer the light that shines before your eyes to be quenched? Will you consent to see the loss of the poor souls who await their salvation from your hands? Must the Heart of your God give up the hope It has conceived of finding in you a helper ready to gather in the harvest He has watered with His blood, and to scatter abroad the fire He came to cast upon the earth? Are not eighteen centuries of waiting and of barren endeavor enough?

You may say that you have at your disposition neither authority, nor eloquence, nor yet fortune or any other of the means of influence which allow a man to exert powerful action over his fellows. But

such an excuse is not to be tolerated. It is based on an error, of which it is the end and aim of the present work to disabuse minds. This book is to prove that the most powerful of all means of influence is at the disposition of all Christians, that all can set it at work, even in situations the least favorable and at every moment of their existence. Not all have the art of speech; not all have strength for labor; but all may at least desire, and consequently all may pray. And by the ardor of their desires, by the fervor and the constancy of their prayers, they may obtain the grace that saves souls, and give help, real and efficacious, to the Divine Love that ceases not to labor for their salvation.

It is this co-operation which the Heart of Jesus asks from you. If you consent to grant this to Him, if the fruits and the merits of so easy an apostleship can only vanquish in your heart all resistance on the part of selfishness and all inaction from indifference, then, thanks be to God, the task this book has set before itself will not prove difficult. The instinct of the heart will supply its insufficiency of words.





# First Part.

*On the Nature of the Apostleship of Prayer, and  
the Sources of its Power.*

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER,  
A LEAGUE OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

CHAPTER I.—FIRST SOURCE: PRAYER.

“ II.—SECOND “ : ASSOCIATION.

“ III.—THIRD “ : UNION WITH THE HEART  
OF JESUS.

“The Apostleship of Prayer was founded on the 3d of December, 1844, at the feet of the ancient sanctuary of Our Lady of Le Puy, in a seminary that was sending forth year by year numerous apostles to all the countries of the world. In the beginning this work had no other aim than to put before these young men, under the restraints of the obscure life of community, a means of exercising their zeal in union with the Apostleship, itself very obscure yet very powerful, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For in the annihilation of His holy tabernacle, He is saving the world.”

*Father Ramière's Introduction to first  
Messenger, 1861.*

## THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER,

### A LEAGUE OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

The very name of this pious work is indication enough of its mainspring, its chief means of action, the weapon with which it arms all those whom it enlists in the holy crusade designed to bring about the triumph of God's cause in the world:—it is *prayer*.

But prayer here finds a power which the fervor of each individual Christian taken alone could never give it:—this power is to come from *association*.

Such association must have a bond of union. This league of prayer must have a leader. Who is capable of being the leader in a crusade undertaken for the salvation of the world? What is capable of being the bond of union among hearts united together in order to bring down grace by their prayers? Only the *Heart of Jesus*, Who without ceasing prays in the holy tabernacle that divine grace may come down to us from heaven.

Thus, *prayer*, as a universal means of action; *association*, as a sovereign condition of the power of prayer; *union with the Heart of Jesus*, as the foun-

tain-head of life in association: these are the elements to which such an apostleship must owe its strength. These too are the points of view from which we shall look at the work, in the different chapters of this first part of our book.

To set forth these points of view in their full light, we have simply to develop the words of the Apostle which have served us as a text. The work of the Apostleship itself is nothing else than putting them in practice. What did St. Paul ask so urgently from the first faithful, and in their person from all future Christians? Prayers for the salvation of all men. And does he ask that such prayers shall be offered up to God by individuals separately? No, they are to be prayers offered by all in common, prayers sent forth from the hearts of all, uttered by the lips of all, and mounting up to heaven like those vapors which rise together from every point of ocean, to shower down fertility on the dried-up fields of earth. But again, is the prayer of all in common to be merely human prayer? No, it is to be prayer offered through the only Mediator of God and men, it is to become divine by passing through His Heart. These are the desires of the Apostle. The Apostleship of Prayer is but the realizing of these desires.

## CHAPTER I.

### FIRST SOURCE OF POWER: PRAYER.

ANALYSIS. The resurrection of dead souls to life.

I. *Grace, the life of the soul.* Definition of grace. Man to share God's bliss, and not a mere happiness proportioned to his nature—this supernatural blessedness a recompense to merit of works done through grace—hence, grace the beginning of glory. A new creation uniting the soul with the Trinity—a new faculty—the title of adoption as children of God. Grace gives divine life to the soul, so that it may produce divine acts. Grace not a mere privilege, but necessary for man's happiness in the present order. Experience shows that only the grace of Christ preserves from evil and inspires good. The privation of grace the soul's death—grace a gift of God alone—when lost its recovery must be from God's mercy. God's call to the dead soul is *actual* grace—an indispensable condition for regaining *sanctifying* grace. Graces obtained by the prayers of others.

II. *Power of prayer for obtaining grace, derived from the nature of grace.* Definition of Prayer. God's goodness and man's weakness—prayer the only condition exacted by God. Grace like the air we breathe—need of opening the mouth.

III. *Power of prayer for obtaining graces necessary to our neighbor.* Prayer the fittest means of co-operating with the work of grace in other souls. All natural means impotent—prayer works with God—fulfils conditions of co-operation, action with reliance on God—efficacious from its relation with the Creator. A different co-operation from preaching and the Sacraments—compared with these—example of Xavier. Mutual help, in one society, of the children of God.

IV. *Power of prayer proved from the words of our*

*Saviour.* Prayer in the Scriptures. Teaching of our Lord—unlimited promises made in favor of prayer. St. Paul—parables.

V. *Our Saviour's promises apply to prayer made for salvation of our neighbor.* Power of prayer for our neighbor—objection from St. Augustine. 1. Principle of St. Thomas: necessity of praying for what we desire in the supernatural order—hence, equal obligation of praying for and desiring the salvation of others—an obligation of charity. 2. The precept included in the promise, under ordinary conditions—the promise unlimited—our Saviour's own teaching in the Lord's Prayer. 3. Explanation of objections from Scriptures and the Fathers—resistance of the will to graces obtained by the prayers of others—example of Monica and Augustine. Application.

VI. *Our Saviour's promises apply to prayers offered by sinners.* Definition of merit—preference to prayers of the just. Power of prayer, not like merit from sanctifying grace, but from actual grace—hence, sinner's prayers efficacious. The reason in the nature of man as God's creature.

VII. *Power of prayer proved by the teaching of the Saints.* The Apostles—early Christians—St. Francis Xavier.

VIII. *Practice of the Saints—our Lord's example.* In the Old Law, Moses, Abraham, Aaron, Josue, Elias, Eliseus—in the Church, feasts of the Holy Cross, Rosary, etc.; various Saints; punishment of Arius, the Albigenses, modern England; recent associations of prayer—apostolic Saints. The early Church, Apostles and Blessed Virgin—our Lord at Nazareth.

IX. *Inefficiency of our prayers—necessary qualities.* Personal merit of prayer—delay of answer. Obstacles, lack of necessary qualities: 1. Faith and confidence—teaching of our Lord; 2. Humility—Pharisee and Publican—Angel Gabriel to Prophet Daniel, to Blessed Virgin; 3. Perseverance—teaching of St. Augustine—of St. Thomas.

X. Summary.

### THE APOSTLESHIP'S POWER FROM PRAYER.

From the start, we find ourselves in the very heart of our subject. There is question of nothing less than to prove to Christians that they are endowed with a power, miraculous and without limit, which for the most part they seem not to dream of even. There is question of proving to them that they can all share in the divinest privilege of the Almighty, in the power of giving life to souls and of giving life back to souls when they have lost it. There is question of showing to them that the exercise of this power is within the reach of the weakest and wretchedest among them all.

Suppose that there was somewhere, within reach of all, an easy means of raising the dead to life, and that the greater number of men did not even suspect its existence. Would not he be doing useful work who should spread abroad the knowledge of it, and prove its power? The Providence of God has refused such a means of resurrection with regard to the passing death of the body. But it has put means in our hands for delivering our brethren from the second



death, from that death of the soul which, of its own nature, is eternal. The most part of Christians, no matter what they may believe in theory, act as if they were persuaded that this great power of bringing souls forth from their tombs is the special privilege of the chosen and select race of the sanctuary. This shows that they understand neither in what the life of the soul consists, nor by what means it is spread and restored. How can we be astonished that there are so many dead souls in the world, that the whole earth is but a vast graveyard wherein soul-corpses lie forsaken? Are not the greater number of those whom God has clothed with the power of bringing back all these dead souls to life, quite unsuspecting of the lofty mission given them? Our endeavor must be to draw them from their deadly ignorance, or from their forgetfulness which is not less deadly. Let us briefly bring to mind the sublime teachings of faith. Let us show that the life of the soul is grace, that the all-powerful means of bringing down grace into souls is prayer.

## I.

## Grace the life of the soul.

Grace ! Is there a Christian who has not heard, thousands of times over, this word sounding in his ears ? Is there one who has not himself said it over a thousand times ? For all that, alas ! to how many hearts the grace of God is riches and strength and hope, while the name of grace awakes in them but a vague and ill-defined notion. And yet, after God, there is nothing more important for us to know than grace, which unites us with God and makes us like unto Him.

What then is grace ? It is a free gift, high above all the gifts of nature, above all the lights of genius and the intoxications of pleasure or glory or power, above the possession of all worlds, above all enjoyment of happiness, however perfect and however lasting, which can exist in the merely natural order. It is a share in the light and love, in the very nature of God.<sup>1</sup> It is the means given us here below to merit the enjoyment of the blessedness of God in heaven. It is God's life begun in time, to have its completeness in eternity.

Had God so wished, He might have destined us to enjoy during eternity a happiness measured to our

<sup>1</sup> *That by these you be made partakers of the divine nature.*

nature. But, out of His absolutely free choice and the excess of a love that we have in no wise merited, He has thought it good to call us to the enjoyment of His own bliss, that we may see Him as He sees Himself and love Him with His own love, and be filled with the fulness of His divine pleasures, so as to make up with Him, through the eternal years, a perfect society of life and joy and glory.

On His part, God has destined us for this divine happiness freely and out of His own good pleasure. But it is not to be given us freely. It must be a reward, not an almsgiving. Our own dignity, as well as the glory of our Creator, demands that, together with Him, we shall work out our destiny. It is therefore necessary that, during the time of our trial, we may be able to merit this blessedness of God; that each of our works here on earth may have its worth in eternal goods; that, consequently, our works may have a value infinite in its way. By themselves they cannot have this worth; and so grace has been given us to make up for the insufficiency of our nature.

Grace then in the Christian soul is the beginning of the glory of heaven. It is the life of God communicated in its strength before it is granted in its unutterable sweetness. It is, as it were, a new spirit created in man, in virtue of which the soul already begins to know God as He knows Himself; not yet of course by the clear vision of His splendor,

but by the inner hearing of His word. Already, too, the soul loves God with that love with which it shall love Him in Heaven, that is, with a love which is a share of God's own love. Grace, then, like glory, is a society closely uniting the soul of the Christian with the Divine Trinity. Through it our understanding is united with God's Word and our will with His Holy Spirit, by a union so close that, after the ineffable union which makes but a single Person of the Son of God and Jesus Christ, it is impossible to imagine any other more real or closer. It creates in us a new sense—the *perception of God*. By it we understand divine things, which are otherwise as unintelligible to the animal man as light and color would be unintelligible to the poor wretch deprived of sight.<sup>4</sup> By grace we become truly the children of God, and we gain the right of calling Him our Father, in a meaning infinitely more real than that which comes from our creation by Him. Creation has made us His servants, rather than His children. It is only by grace that we are brought into His household and become His lawful heirs.<sup>5</sup>

Such is grace looked at in itself and in its source. It is for our soul what our soul is for our body. Our

<sup>4</sup> *The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined. But the spiritual man judgeth all things.* I. Corinthians, ii. 14, 15.

<sup>5</sup> *If sons, heirs also.* Romans, viii. 17.

body, from its union with the soul, has a life which it could never have of itself—a life that lifts it up from a purely material nature, to make of it a living, and in a way a reasonable, that is, a human body. So too our soul, from its union with God, receives a life which it could never gain by its own strength, and this life lifts it above itself, making it to share in the divine nature and giving it the power of eliciting acts that are truly divine.

But let one thing be well understood. God has called us to become His children, and He has willed that His own Son should become our Brother—*The First-born amongst many brethren*.<sup>6</sup> Henceforward, this divine life of grace, which lifts us so far above our nature, becomes a necessary condition to us. After this life there is no happiness we can expect other than the supernatural glory of heaven. In the same way, here on earth we cannot make pretence to any virtue or any spiritual life other than that which is the outcome of our union with God by grace. If God had so willed, the different elements that go to make up our bodies might have been parts of the body of some animal, or even of a tree or a stone. Then they would have been subjected to other laws, and might have fulfilled more lowly destinies. But since our soul has taken hold on them, to share with them its own life, they have no choice but to live this life, which is higher than their nature, or else to perish.

<sup>6</sup> Romans, viii. 29.

They must share in the dignity and happiness of a reasonable soul, or they must fall lower than the animal, lower than the stone and the tree which has died, and be given over to the most hideous and offensive of all corruption. It is the same with our souls in regard to God. If the soul had not been raised to so high a dignity, if the Creator had not destined it to share His own bliss and His own life, it might have aspired to a happiness nearer the level of its nature. Not being lifted up so high, it would have escaped the danger of falling so low. But as it is, this is man's lot: for eternity, either heaven or hell, that is to say, the everlasting bliss of God or the everlasting torments of the devils; and for the time of our stay on earth, either grace or sin, that is to say, the life of God or the death of the soul. It is a hideous death, leaving in the poor soul no natural strength sufficient to hold out long against the onset of evil; and it makes the soul the plaything of the evil spirit, a thing hateful to God and repulsive to itself.

This is what faith teaches us, and this too, with an evidence unhappily but too clear, is proved to us by the history of the past and the experience of the present.

Vainly indeed shall we seek, apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, for a fountain of life powerful enough to keep our souls undefiled from the allurements of evil and the contagion of vice. What has humanity

been at every period of its existence, what unhappily is it still to-day? Naught but a vast desert wherein the Church appears to us as a fountain of living waters, scattering everywhere in their course faith and love and self-denial and mutual devotedness, every great virtue and every great work. But in the measure in which men turn aside from this stream of grace, from this influence of Jesus Christ, you see understandings darkened and whole peoples becoming material; while souls and societies fall a prey to a death that is so much the more hideous as the powers of the souls were loftier and the civilization of the societies more advanced.

Now we know what is the life of souls; and we know in what lies their death. The life of souls is union with God by His grace, an ineffable union making them to share in His light and love and life, and thus preparing them to share one day in His blessedness and glory. The death of souls is privation of this life, a fatal privation which involves the loss of all life useful to salvation and of all right to the happiness of eternity; while it also entails slavery beneath the yoke of evil spirits and shameful passions.

Once we understand the nature and laws of the life of souls, we understand also the beginning of such life. And we know by what way it can find entrance once again into souls that have lost it.

The life of God can come only from God. Vainly would he, for whom Divine Mercy had not

destined it, build up a new tower of Babel or, like the fabulous Titans, heap up mountains on mountains, to find this life at the gates of heaven. Vainly, to merit it, would he bring to his aid every resource of the vastest genius, or heroic endeavor and the accomplishment of great deeds and appalling sacrifices. The discoveries of genius, the endeavors, the deeds, the sacrifices of men, are all human ; they are consequently out of all measure with grace, which is a gift truly divine.

Thus, it happens that a soul to which God has given His grace casts grace away by an abuse of its free will. But it can never regain what it has lost until God's mercy shall draw near to it, even as Jesus Christ drew near to the sepulchre of Lazarus, calling on him, ordering him to come forth from his tomb. Without this free call of God's mercy, it would be infinitely more impossible for a soul dead to grace to recover it, than for a corpse already in corruption to come back to life. Such a call of God's goodness to the soul walled up in the tomb of sin, the invitation by which He urges it to shake off its corruption and to come forth from vice, the inspiration by which He strives to give back to man the breath of life He had breathed into him from the beginning, but which sin has quenched,—belongs to that order of helps which are called *actual graces*.

It is plain that actual grace is indispensable, in order to regain *sanctifying grace* which is the life



of the soul. Without it the just man is incapable of performing any work useful to salvation ; and without it the sinner cannot but remain in death. Would we know how far it may have been put in our power to give to our fellow-men the life of grace, the life of the soul, the life of God? We have only to ask what power we have to win for them actual grace. Now, to this question Holy Scripture and Catholic tradition reply by a teaching as certain as it is consoling. With a unanimous voice they affirm that it is in our power to obtain for our brethren, as well as for ourselves, the most powerful graces. For this we have a means easy and efficacious and infallible ; this means is prayer.

## II.

The power of prayer to obtain grace, drawn from the very nature of grace.

There is hardly need of proving that prayer is an easy means of obtaining grace.

For what is prayer? It is nothing else than the expression of a desire, the feeling of some need humbly manifested to God. What is easier than to desire? What less painful to the needy one than to feel his need, and to manifest it to Him Whom he sees disposed to aid him? If this world's goods were to be bought by a mere desire, poverty would have fled long since far from the earth. The passing bell would be heard no longer if, to escape death and banish sickness, it were enough to desire health. We can scarcely imagine how God reckons the priceless gift of His grace, the sharing in His life and happiness, at so cheap a rate. Yet, however much we may wonder at it, we cannot deny that it is so. A more careful consideration of our position toward God will show us that it cannot be otherwise.

God is infinite power and goodness. Man is naught but poverty and weakness. And, if the All-Good would give Himself to our poverty, if the Almighty would lift our weakness to His own level, what conditions must He impose? He cannot demand that man should go a part of the way, so

long as he is incapable of a single step. No, God must ask one thing only of man—that he acknowledge that he is but weakness, so that he may not afterward credit himself with the glorious wonders which the Almighty shall work in him. Infinite riches will ask of our poverty only that it shall recognize its own utter want, by feeling and expressing its needs, so as to be enabled to fill it with gifts.

Prayer then is the only condition which it befits God's generosity to exact from His creatures, in order that they may receive His Heavenly gifts. He has given them the obligation of living a life as far above the strength of their will as it surpasses all their understanding. He can no longer impose upon them, as a condition previous to the reception of this life, anything else than the expression of a desire for it. Even then it is necessary that He should help, for the forming of this desire, the absolute powerlessness of His creatures.

The air of heaven is more essential than any food to our physical life. Unless it refreshes our lungs and renews our blood at every moment, the whole machinery of our organism ceases to act, our heart beats no longer, and the death-struggle begins. Yet the air, which is so necessary to us, is the least within our grasp of all the elements. Has not Providence in some way been wanting, in thus depriving us of every natural means of providing ourselves with this necessity of life, which we cannot do with-

out for an instant? Let us see what an All-Fatherly Providence has done. Just because the air is the most necessary and the least easy to lay hold on of all things that sustain life, so it shall be the commonest and the easiest of all to procure. To have wheat, you must cultivate the earth. For water, you must at least reach out your hand. But to have air, it is enough to open the mouth and empty the chest; and thereupon the air, impelled by that love of God which preserves and moves all things, forces its way into our lungs, gives fuel to our blood, and renews our life. At the beginning of our existence we should have been incapable of guessing the need of air and the kind of movement we ought to go through in order to take it in. But God makes us perform this movement by a blind instinct, for which we can give no reason but the infinite care of His Fatherly Providence. He takes it on Himself to see that our organs move so long as, by some act of foolishness, we do not set ourselves against this kindly and self-preserving action.

In this we find a striking likeness to what passes in the moral order. For the life of our soul also, the air of heaven is necessary. But it is not the air of the lower and material heavens, which are the dwelling-place of the birds. It is the air of the upper heaven, of the true heaven, of the heaven of spirits. It is the air of which the Blessed live, and the Angels, and God Himself. Far more than the air of our

earthly atmosphere is this divine air beyond the reach of our own pursuit, not to be grasped by any efforts of our own. Yet without it we can do naught here below save to struggle through a fearful agony, soon to give ourselves up to everlasting death. What means have we of escaping this danger? Ah truly, a means in everything worthy of our Father's goodness! The divine air of grace shall not wait until we follow after it, vainly endeavoring to lay hold upon it. It shall surround us like an ocean into whose depths we are forever plunged. It presses itself upon us for our life's support. No sooner do we *open our mouth*,<sup>7</sup> no sooner do we empty our heart to give it room, by the lowly acknowledgment of our nothingness and the fervor of our prayer, than its bounty rushes in upon us under the infinite pressure of our God's mercy. And it shall keep life in us so long as we do not foolishly take this life by persisting in the real moral suffocation which follows on the refusal to pray.

This, once again, is what God asks, in order that He may give us the life of His grace. Let us acknowledge that, if He could scarcely ask more, He also could not ask for less. His wisdom, His love, the esteem and respect He has for our dignity,<sup>8</sup> do not suffer Him to treat us like the irrational creatures to which He gives, without any co-operation on their

<sup>7</sup> Psalm cxviii. 131.

<sup>8</sup> *With great reverence Thou disposest of us.* Wisdom, xii. 18.

part, whatever is necessary to their preservation. The glory of man, we have already said, is to be along with God the worker of his own destiny. He can do nothing unless God goes before him with His grace; but God's grace also, on its side, can work in him no meritorious act, unless he gives it his co-operation. Merit would no longer be merit, if it were gained by an involuntary act. Hence it would lose all that makes it glorious alike to God and to man. And everyone can see that, of all the different kinds of co-operation which we are able to give to God's grace, the easiest, that which costs least, that which is most within reach of every understanding and every weakness, is the freely expressed desire of grace, the lowly acknowledgment of our powerlessness—prayer.

## III.

The power of prayer for obtaining the graces necessary to our neighbor.

Prayer is also the kind of co-operation best suited to help on the work of grace in the souls of our brethren, making us the helpers of God in their regeneration.

Indeed, it is clear that our own natural energies can in no wise help to the success of a work so entirely supernatural.

Let science draw near to a tomb, in all the strength of her most wonderful inventions and with the weapons of her most highly perfected apparatus. Let her apply to the cold and lifeless corpse her most subtile fluids and most powerful reagents. She may perhaps be able to start up a few convulsive movements that, for an instant, one might take to be signs of life. But at the end of a few moments the corpse would again become motionless and rigid; and the work of death, far from being delayed by these idle experiments, might only be hurried forward. This is because the life of the human body is not a mechanical or chemical force, nor a fluid more or less subtile. Its life is the rational soul. Once this soul has departed from the body, it is not in the power of science to bring it back, whether from heaven or from hell, into its prison-house of clay.

For a yet stronger reason, it is not in the power of human science and eloquence to bring back to the soul the life of God, of which it has had the misfortune to be deprived. Science may be able to show the necessity of such life. Eloquence, by its vivid pictures and overpowering transports, may produce in the sinner's heart some passing emotion, and lead him perhaps to conceive some feeling of horror for his unhappy state. But to make him understand the possibility of a return to the life of God and to inspire in him the sweet hope of regaining this life, above all, to give him strength to overcome the obstacles that sever him from it—eloquence can never do this by itself; for this is infinitely above the power of men or Angels. The life of the soul is God; and there is only one power able to give back God to the soul, it is the power of God Himself.

We cannot, without God, have work in the regeneration of our brethren. But, with God, we can work for it with much fruit. Yes, our infinitely merciful Father, Who loves all the works of His hands, and Who loves souls more than all His other works,<sup>9</sup> has given us an all-powerful means of bringing back life to the souls which have lost it. This means is prayer.

*<sup>9</sup> For Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made. . . . But Thou sparest all: because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls. Wisdom, xi. 25-7.*



Prayer perfectly fulfils every condition of the co-operation which God wishes to have from us in the work of our brother's salvation. For, on the one hand, He wishes our co-operation to be active, constant, devoted. He demands that we shall aid each other in reaching the sublime end for which He has created us. He obliges us to love our brethren just as He obliges us to love Himself, these two duties making but one. He will not have us persuade ourselves that we are sincerely devoted to His interests, unless we labor with all our strength to make Him reign in the souls which constitute His true kingdom. And He is not willing that we should imagine we love ourselves truly, unless we love our neighbor as ourselves, that is, unless we labor for his salvation just as we labor for our own.

But, on the other hand, God desires that the co-operation we are to give to His grace for the salvation of our neighbor, should be of such kind as to leave to Him all the glory of this work—the divinest of all His works. Therefore, we must make all our strength serve to this end ; but we must apply it in such wise that our action shall seek in God alone its power and fruitfulness.

Prayer realizes these conditions after a wonderful manner. When we pray God for the salvation of our brethren, we are able to make use of all that is in us of energy and charity and zeal. At the same time we declare, by the very fervor of our prayer, that we

are fully persuaded of our own powerlessness, since from God alone we await the spirit of life that shall bring forth from their tomb those souls for which we pray.

To this wondrous mingling of strength and humility, prayer owes its boundless power over the Heart of God ; for it is these two qualities that allow of His being glorified in His creatures. He has given us a certain amount of power, clearly with the design that we shall make use of it. Yet He can never suffer us to act as of ourselves alone, and all the glory of our works must be turned back to Him. Because prayer perfectly satisfies these two demands of Divine Wisdom, it obtains all things from Divine Goodness. For it must not be forgotten that the resistless impulse of Supreme Goodness is to give, to pour Itself forth without measure. It is an infinite ocean of light and life and bliss ; and It ever tends to send forth Its floods upon all that can receive them. Only our pride and our faithlessness can bar the way to Its outpouring. But as soon as prayer comes to overthrow this double barrier, Divine Goodness will fulfil, beyond the measure of abundance, all our desires.

Thus, in a very true sense, prayer will make us the saviours of our brethren. Nothing of His glory will be taken from God, and it will put us in the way of a most efficient co-operation with Him in the greatest of all His works.

Of course, there is another kind of co-operation that God may ask from chosen souls. He may call certain men to be His ministers, to give forth, according to rites of divine institution, that grace which the prayers of their brethren have brought down from heaven. To others He may entrust the ministry of the Gospel, making of their words, as it were, a channel through which the torrents of His love and light may be shed abroad upon souls. To others, again, He may choose to give yet other gifts. These different ministries make men, in a higher sense if you will, the co-workers of God and His representatives on earth. They confer a higher dignity; but of themselves they give no merit that is to be compared to that of prayer. It is impossible to win grace for others without obtaining it at the same time for oneself; while, unhappily, it is but too easy for a priest to distribute grace among the faithful without keeping the least little share for himself. The Apostleship of Prayer brings with it naught but graces; the Apostleship of the Word and of the Sacraments, along with great graces, brings also a great responsibility.

Even from the point of view of its efficiency, the former is in many ways superior to the latter. For the Apostleship of the Word, at any one time, can be exercised only toward a very small number of souls. It is bounded by limits of time and space. True, a burning zeal may have great power to stretch

its bounds, a Xavier may make his words heard to the furthest lands and regenerate his millions of souls. Yet, like the ocean whose vast reach met its equal in his zeal, he was sure at the last to expire upon that shore where God had marked out for him the end of his course. But the Apostleship of Prayer breaks all bounds, and withdraws itself from every restraint of time and space. Its action may be exerted at one and the same time in the opposite extremities of the world. It can reach out even to the end of time. It reaches whithersoever God's power reaches. The Apostleship of the Word is the medium through which God gives out His grace to souls. But the Apostleship of Prayer, in union with the prayers of the Divine Mediator, makes use of this all-powerful medium that it may work out in souls its own holy desires, which God has inspired.

It is clear that such an apostleship is the only means in our power for fulfilling the obligation imposed on us of loving all men as ourselves, and of laboring with fruit for the salvation of all. Between the efficacy of this means and the universal character of this duty there is a necessary bond. If God had not given us the one, He could not have burdened us with the other. If prayer did not put us in a condition to give effective help to men, even to those we have never seen and shall never know here below, God would have been obliged to limit the commandment of charity to those men whom we should meet along the path of our exile.

Plainly, this doctrine of the limitless power of prayer, far from being one of the side-teachings of the Christian religion, is on the contrary a part of its foundation. On it depends the boundless scope of the great commandment of charity. Yet more, on it rests the very unity of the society of the children of God, since there is no society among reasonable creatures except inasmuch as they actually help each other to reach their end.

## IV.

The power of prayer proved from the words of our Saviour.

All that we have said thus far only proves the power of prayer by analogy and reasoning. The analogy, of course, is plausible ; and the reasoning is based on the surest teachings of our creed, while the connection seems to be without a flaw. Yet we must acknowledge that such proofs can never take the place with us of more positive assurance.

The power assigned to prayer is very wonderful ; and very amazing is the privilege by which a wretched and sin-stained creature becomes able to draw down the life of God into his own heart and into the hearts of his brethren, and at his pleasure to bring upon the earth not only the rain and fire of heaven, as did Elias, but the dew of grace and the flame of divine charity. All this seems so incredible that we cannot be dispensed from establishing the reality of such a privilege by the most authoritative proof and the exact words of God Himself.

Eternal thanks to Divine Goodness ! there is nothing in the world easier than the production of such proof. There is scarcely a teaching in the whole Christian revelation that is more clearly laid down, or more frequently repeated, or surrounded with greater light of evidence. Our only difficulty is to choose, from among the great number of divine declarations,

prophecies, promises, comparisons, parables, heaped together by the Holy Spirit in the books of the Old and the New Testament, that which may best persuade us of this consoling truth. God foresaw that the very sweetness of this doctrine and the quite divine power with which it tends to clothe us, would raise up against it distrust on the part of our unworthiness and resistance from our cowardice and misery. For this reason He has left nothing untried in order to break down this obstacle, the greatest and in fact the only one that might hinder the execution of the merciful plans He has over us.

We will not linger for the present on the earliest manifestations of this power of prayer. We will listen to none of the glorious testimonies borne by patriarchs and prophets to this doctrine. Let us pass over the ages, through all the shadows of the Old Law, and come at once to the full day of the Gospel.

The Word of God, Who is Incarnate Truth, in order to give us to understand what prayer can do, uses all the resources of His divine eloquence and every solemn phrase that human speech can furnish.

He has bidden us be content to say Yea and Nay, without formal additions. And when there is question of teaching us this capital truth, He cannot thus content Himself. And yet again, if ever anyone had a right to be believed simply on His word, it was surely He to Whom error and falsehood are infinitely more repugnant than darkness to the light. But

a mere affirmation is not enough for Him, He must needs add His oath: *Amen, Amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.*<sup>10</sup>

Are not these words clear enough to solve every doubt, and powerful enough to conquer all our distrust? Can anything be wished for, plainer or stronger? After this, can the power of prayer be called in question without calling in question God's own truthfulness?

It should be noted, too, that it was not under ordinary circumstances and in a passing way that our Divine Master pronounced these words. It was the eve of His Passion, just after He had instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He has left them as a part of the discourse after the Supper, which He bequeathed to us as the testament of His love. In this discourse He comes back again and again to this unlimited power of the prayers which we shall offer in His name, as being the most precious legacy of all His inheritance.

Not only shall the Father glorify His Son, by granting whatever we ask in the name of this Son well-beloved; but the Son, to glorify His Father, shall take His pleasure in listening to every desire that has His Father's glory for its object. *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*<sup>11</sup> This

<sup>10</sup> St. John, xvi. 23.

<sup>11</sup> St. John, xiv. 13.



is as much as to tell us that He will take upon Himself after His ascension the obligation of listening to our prayers, just as He imposed upon Himself during His mortal life the task of procuring by every means the glory of His Father. This is to be His work in heaven, just as His work here on earth was to labor, to preach, and to suffer.

Between the Father and the Son, therefore, there will be, as it were, a divine rivalry, when there is question of listening to our prayers. The Son will make haste to help us with all His power, in order to continue His work in us and visibly to glorify His Father in His members, as He glorified Him in His own Person during His mortal life. On His side, God the Father has become indebted without measure to His Divine Son because of the glory He reaps from His Incarnation; and He will make it His happiness to pay over to Him this debt, in the persons of all whom He finds ready to unite themselves with the work of the Incarnate Word. And God's Spirit, the common Love of the Father and the Son, will make it His pleasure to satisfy in our souls every demand of this wondrous rivalry. For the Holy Spirit is the beginning of our prayers, and He too is their fruit. It is He who inspires them in us, and He carries them out. He is present in us, and in us He shows forth a fruitfulness that does not belong to Him in the bosom of the august Trinity. He will make it His pleasure to glorify in us the Father through the

Son and the Son through the Father, and thus give back to the other Divine Persons something of the glory He receives from Them.

On a foundation that can never be shaken, that is to say, on God's explicit promise, we have thus established the all-powerful efficacy of prayer. Already we have a right to that sweet sense of undisturbed security which is enjoyed by all those who rest their hopes on the truth and the goodness of the Almighty. Thus St. Paul says:<sup>12</sup> *God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath:*

*That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us.*

We might content ourselves with such an assurance. But our Divine Master, in His mercy, was not willing to stop here; so let us not be wearied in gathering up the sweet pledges He has given us of His infallible aid.

On His divine lips, promises are turned to entreaties. It is no longer He Who is our benefactor; it seems that we do Him service when we implore His goodness. Listen to His urgent appeals: *Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* And again: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek,*

<sup>12</sup> Hebrews, vi. 17, 18.

*and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. These words are clear enough, but He adds, in order to make them yet stronger: For everyone that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*<sup>13</sup>

Is not this positive enough? No, by an argument the most tangible, by the most striking of all comparisons, He must needs remove from our minds even the last trace of doubt and tear from our hearts the least root of distrust. *What man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask of him a fish, will he reach him a serpent?* Who would not see the point of these comparisons? But our Saviour will not give us the trouble of applying them ourselves. Listen to what follows: *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in Heaven give good gifts to them that ask it?*<sup>14</sup> Does not this tell us that we cannot doubt of the efficacy of prayer, without offering the cruelest insult to our Heavenly Father—to “the good God”? For it supposes Him to be worse than the worst among ourselves.

Elsewhere He goes further still in His unspeakable condescension. He accepts a supposition that so outrages Him, He will even grant us that we believe Him worse than ourselves. But what He

<sup>13</sup> St. John, xvi. 24; St. Luke, xi.

<sup>14</sup> St. Matthew, vii.

will not allow us is that we should doubt of the efficacy of prayer, even in this supposition which is absurd a thousand times over. *Which of you, He says to us, shall have a friend and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him:—And he shall answer and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.—Yet, if he shall knock, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say to you: Ask, and it shall be given to you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you.*<sup>15</sup>

Another time He does not hesitate to compare God His Father to an evil judge, that He may thus far outstrip the extremest unreason of our distrust. A poor woman comes to ask for justice. The judge closes his door upon her; and the victim of his injustice knocks. They do not open to her, they pretend not to hear. She keeps on knocking loudly and so long that, wearied out, the wicked judge decides to do her justice.

The only possible meaning of these parables is that our prayers, if we unweariedly persevere in them, shall have an efficacy beyond fail, even though they were not based, as they are, on the infinite justice and

<sup>15</sup> St. Luke, xi.

the infinite goodness of God. Even, too, were there question of making Him modify the wonted order of His Providence, or of constraining Him to change general laws in our favor and to uplift and stretch forth His arm, our prayers shall still have this power if they are animated by faith and continued with unshaken patience.

## V.

Our Saviour's promises extend to prayer offered for the salvation of our neighbor.

We cannot, however, pass over a difficulty that, no doubt, has already presented itself to the mind of more than one of our readers. Does this unfailing power, guaranteed by our Saviour to trusting and persevering prayer, belong to prayer offered for our neighbor as well as to that which we offer for ourselves?

If we had regard only to certain words of St. Augustine, or even of Holy Writ, we might persuade ourselves of the contrary.

In truth, in the Holy Scriptures we hear how God, provoked by the crimes, and the obstinacy in crime, of the children of Israel, said to His prophet: *Do not pray for this people, and do not withstand Me, for I will not hear them. . . . If Moses and Samuel shall stand before Me, My soul is not towards this people.* Even more plainly St. John tells us, in his First Epistle, that *there is a sin unto death*, so that our prayers cannot obtain forgiveness for it.<sup>16</sup> St. Augustine, also, sets up a difference between the prayers we offer to God for our own salvation and those we offer for the salvation of our neighbor. The

<sup>16</sup> Jeremias, vii. 16, xv. 1; I. St. John, v. 16.

first, according to him, are heard without fail ; so too are the others, but not always in their full extent.<sup>17</sup>

To solve this difficulty, and to bring before our mind an exact statement of Catholic teaching on this important point, we must lay down certain principles.

1.—First of all, with St. Thomas, let us have it clearly understood that whatever ought to be an object of desire on our part in the supernatural order, ought also to be for us an object of prayer. For every good thing that belongs to this order, is beyond the reach of our own efforts and can come to us only from God ; and only by demanding it from God by prayer, can we realize the desire which it awakens in us.

Beyond all doubt, therefore, just as it is our rigorous duty to desire the salvation of all men, so it is a like rigorous duty to pray in order to obtain it. That we should desire the salvation of our neighbor it is impossible to doubt, if we but remember that such a desire is one and the same thing with the love of our neighbor, which is the second commandment and the completion of the law. From this we ought to come to the conclusion, with St. Thomas and St. John Chrysostom, that as necessity obliges us to pray for ourselves, so charity obliges us to pray for our neighbor. And as charity is our first duty and our chief recommendation in the sight of God, we can-

<sup>17</sup> *Tract. 102 in Joan.*

not doubt that God attaches yet more value to the prayers we offer Him for the salvation of our brethren than to those we send up for our own salvation.<sup>18</sup>

2.—Thus prayers offered to God for our neighbor's salvation enter into the designs of our Lord. They are nothing else than the carrying out of one of His most urgent precepts. How then can we doubt that they too are comprised in the solemn promises He has made us, of listening to us—*whatsoever we shall ask the Father in His name?* Remark well that His promise is without limitation. Our Divine Master, in the different circumstances in which He repeats this, places indeed certain conditions to its unfaillingness. He demands that our prayers should be made in His name, that is to say, they should rest on His merits and relate to our soul's salvation, which is the only end of His coming on earth. He wishes that they should be made with entire faith and unwearied perseverance. But, once He has laid down these conditions, I nowhere see that their efficiency is narrowed by any other limitation. On the contrary, our Divine Master everywhere makes use of the most universal expressions. *All that you shall ask with faith shall be granted to you. All that you shall ask My Father in My name I will do.*<sup>19</sup> It would be like giving our Saviour the lie, to take away from His promises in favor of all our prayers,

<sup>18</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily .4 (op. imperf.) in Matth.*

<sup>19</sup> St. Mark, xi. 24; St. John, xiv. 13.



those prayers which we are bound to offer for our brethren! If these prayers were mere works of supererogation, or if we might make them or not just to satisfy some pious whim of our charity, then it might be understood that we have not the same assurance and cannot claim the benefit of promises so consoling. But we have seen that these prayers, as much as, yes, even more than others, are imposed upon us as an obligation and are inspired by our Lord. They too must be heard without fail.

This conclusion is very simple and very evident. Yet we have a proof still more imperative of our Saviour's intention to include in His promises prayers made for our neighbor, as well as those which we offer for ourselves. According to St. Luke, He has attached His promise especially to that prayer which He Himself has taught us—to "the Lord's Prayer."<sup>20</sup> Now, in that prayer, it is for all our brethren, quite as much as for ourselves, that we ask of God graces for soul and body, for time and for eternity. This is pre-eminently *the* prayer. It is the prayer God the Father hears most willingly, because in it He recognizes the voice of His Son. It is like a document signed by our Saviour's hand, which God cannot fail of honoring. And this prayer binds together with ourselves all our brethren. For all the children of God, present and yet to be, it asks the coming of the kingdom of their Father, their daily bread, their

<sup>20</sup> St. Luke, xi.

deliverance from sin and from all evil. Over the entire earth, in every place and at all times, it desires to see the doing of the will of God, which is the sanctification of men. We can no longer question the fact—prayer for our neighbor's salvation is not less efficacious than that which we offer for our own salvation.

3.—How then are we to explain the texts of Scripture and of the Holy Fathers which seem to deny to prayer for our neighbor the unfailing power which they grant to prayer for ourselves?

The explanation is easy.

In the salvation of men, which is the aim of these prayers, there are two things to be clearly distinguished: God's work and man's work. God's work is to predispose the sinful soul by a supernatural light that enlightens it on its unhappy condition, and by an indeliberate movement of the will which impels it to come forth from its present state. But when grace has performed this first part of its task, it waits, before completing it, until the soul freely yields consent to the merciful offer made it. By the fact that such consent is free, it is in the power of the soul to give or to refuse it. Doubtless it is in God's power to obtain it in spite of all resistance, if He so wishes; but the laws of His Providence demand that He shall very rarely make use of this power, which is miraculous.

It is just here our prayers for the salvation of our

neighbor may be deprived of their effective power. On God's side, we can be certain nothing will be wanting to these poor souls, for whom we interest ourselves, in order that they may obtain their salvation. Each prayer we offer in their behalf will gain them a grace, measured by the fervor, the confidence, and the perseverance with which we have prayed. From this point of view the efficiency of our prayers is as unailing as when we ask of God the graces we need for ourselves. But over the free will of these other souls we have not the same power as over our own will, and hence we can never be certain they will not hinder the action of grace by some insuperable obstacle. We can even imagine, on the part of some sinners, a degree of malice and obstinacy so great that their conversion is morally impossible. Beyond any doubt, it is of them only St. John speaks, when he tells us there are sins so *unto death* that no prayer can obtain their forgiveness.

Briefly, we can say, with St. Thomas, that when the prayers we offer for our neighbor's salvation fail of their effect, it is not because they did not unailingly win from God the graces we asked of Him, but solely because the sinner stubbornly repelled the graces won.

But we may add, with the same holy Doctor, that, since we do not know the interior disposition of souls, there is no sinner on earth, however obstinate, for whom we cannot and ought not to pray.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> 2. 2., q. 83, a. 7 *ad* 2, & 3.

True, the hardening of the will may go beyond all bounds. But there is no bound which the power of grace cannot leap over ; and this power goes on increasing with our prayer. Therefore, in the measure of our prayers, it becomes more and more likely that the rebellious will, in the end, will give the consent refused till now to an impulse less strong. This probability may so increase that it becomes, equivalently, a kind of moral certainty. Indeed, the graces gained for a sinner go on increasing in the measure of the number of prayers offered for him, and in proportion to their fervor, to perseverance in them, and to the degree of holiness of the persons who offer them. So we can understand how a moment may come when the light which shines upon his understanding will be so bright, and the impulse pushing his heart toward God so vehement, that the consent of the will will be wrested from him, as it were, in spite of all resistance. This was the meaning of that holy bishop who assured the mother of Augustine, when praying and weeping over her wandering son, that "the child of so many tears could not perish." It is true, such an assurance does not rest on the rules of rigid justice. It is based on the riches of a mercy as fruitful in its inventions as it is generous in its aid. What else can be needed to fill with courage and confidence many an inconsolable Monica?

This fills us with confidence for the future. But

should not this thought also cover us with confusion for the past? How is it possible not to regret having made so little use of the limitless power we have had in our hands ever since we reached the age of reason? How, without grief, shall we look upon those years, —all too many, wherein we prayed so little for sinners? It is impossible we should not feel our souls torn asunder by the keen conviction, from which we cannot shield ourselves, that there are now souls in hell —perhaps a great number of them—who might have been saved and have owed to us their eternal happiness, who would now be praying in heaven for us, had we but prayed and labored and suffered for them. This reflection ought to inflame us with a zeal and determination to make use of this weapon, which is so powerful and in our hands. It should lead us to repair, by our fervor, the great losses which our wretched carelessness has brought after it in its train.

## VI.

The promises of Jesus Christ extend to prayers offered by sinners.

A new difficulty comes up at this point. Will our prayers for ourselves or others have any effect if we are so unhappy as not to be in the state of grace? In other words, is it only the prayer of *the just man* that without fail obtains whatsoever it asks? Or has this power been likewise given to the sinner's prayer, when in other respects he fulfils the required conditions?

First of all, it is certain that *merit* properly so-called—that which gives strict right to eternal reward, and is called in theology “condign” merit (*de condigno*)—belongs only to the prayer of the just man, although that of the sinner may have a certain “congruous” merit (*de congruo*).

Again, it is certain that, if all else be equal, the prayer of the just man must work the greater effect. The just man is *God's friend*. His prayer, issuing from a pure soul, is more pleasing to the Divine Majesty and is stronger in the merits of Jesus Christ. And, since the just man habitually fulfils the will of God, it is meet that God should also do his will, according to the words of the Prophet: *The Lord will do the will of them that fear Him.*<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Psalm cxliv. 19.

But, in this place, we are considering prayer from the single point of view of its efficiency in regard to the grace we ask for.

It will be easy to answer the difficulty, if we recall the teaching of St. Thomas, that prayer has its power of pleading (*impetration*) from faith and confidence. He says: "The merit of prayer comes to it from charity; but its efficiency, from confidence."<sup>23</sup>

What is the reason of this difference? It is this: merit, which is the right to the heavenly inheritance, is the proper fruit of sanctifying grace, and consequently of charity, which makes us the adoptive sons of God. The efficacy of prayer, on the other hand, is the fruit of actual grace; and this grace God gives even to those who have lost His friendship, and indeed, as we have seen, it is the only means by which they can regain it. When the Prophet would raise to life the widow's son he leaned over him again and again, and placed his mouth upon the mouth of the corpse, until at last he made it breathe with himself.<sup>24</sup> So God leans over the sinful soul and breathes into it His grace. Let the soul give itself up to this quickening breath with entire faith; let it breathe with God, by prayer full of confidence; and the divine breathing, which no faltering on our part deprives of its virtue, will not fail to give back its life to the soul.

<sup>23</sup> 2. 2., q. 83, a. 13.

<sup>24</sup> IV. Kings, iv. 34.

Therefore the sinner, like the just man, may promise himself to obtain whatever he asks, provided that his prayer has the other conditions required. This is a doctrine comforting beyond measure, and which cannot be too often explained. For there are many persons who fancy that since merit, properly so called, cannot be expected from actions done in the state of mortal sin, so too it is useless to pray as long as they remain in that unhappy state—something which is utterly false, as we have just remarked with St. Thomas.

St. Chrysostom adds: “Whosoever asks receives, says Jesus Christ, whether he be a just man or not.” And St. Augustine: “If God did not listen to sinners, vainly would the publican have prayed: *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.*”<sup>25</sup>

But really, someone will say, how can it be that souls in a state of sin, and therefore odious in the eyes of God, can have such power over His Heart, and that He should not be able to refuse to their prayers His priceless blessings? We shall understand how this is, without any difficulty, if in these poor souls we distinguish, as St. Thomas does, two things which the Fatherly eye of God discerns with perfect distinctness. On one side is their sin, which He detests; on the other is their nature, which He has made to His own likeness, and in which there yet

<sup>25</sup> S. J. Chrys., *Op. imperf. in Matth., hom. 18*; S. Aug., *Tr. 44 in Joan.*



remain many good natural qualities, and even many graces that sin has been unable to drive out. And God loves their nature with an infinite love, with the same love which brought Him to give His Only Son for their salvation. Thus, because of His infinite holiness, He puts far from Him every movement of the soul that is caused by sin. But He is quite as ready, in His infinite mercy, to welcome and give His favor to the contrary movements that spring from the supernatural habits of faith and hope, and always tend to bring these souls again under the sway of charity. Prayer is one of these movements of the soul, and the most powerful of all. How then can it be otherwise than pleasing to God? Of course, He does not recognize in the sinner's prayer that voice of His Son which cries out to Him in the person of Christ's living members, who rightfully pray in confidence that knows no bounds: *Abba, Father*.<sup>26</sup> But He does recognize in it the lamentation of the prodigal entreating pity, and that heart-rending cry, which no father ever yet withstood. The Holy Ghost dwells not yet in these guilty hearts unpurified by penance, but He is already at their door, He knocks, He begs for entrance.<sup>27</sup> Their prayer is but the echo of His own divine entreaties. How can we wonder that God unfailingly listens to

<sup>26</sup> *Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father.* Galatians, iv. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Conc. Trid., Sess. vi.*

the sighs He Himself has breathed into us—that He fulfils the desires of which He is the beginning, and which, as they pass through the sinner's soul, give something of their own purity and strength? The sinner who can pray has already within himself the germ of life; for prayer, which is the fruit of faith and hope, is the seed of charity.

## VII.

The power of prayer proved by the teachings of the Saints.

We now know how far the power of prayer reaches. By the light of God's Word, we have entered into the very depths of the consoling mystery of grace. We have seen how souls are born to the life of God, and how, when they have lost this supernatural life, they can regain it. Prayer has shown itself to be the resistless force attracting light and heat from heaven. We have heard how the Incarnate Word of God, as He proffers us this means of obtaining all things from God His Father, surrounds its boundless efficacy with the strongest guarantees and insures to it not only the power of giving life to ourselves, but the power also of giving it back to all our brethren who are deprived of it.

We might stop here. Yet it will not be without use to ask the Saints how they have understood these promises of God. We have considered prayer in its divine fountain-head. Let us follow along its fruitful course, and see how it sends forth all kinds of heavenly fruit.

The Apostles were the faithful guardians and the infallible interpreters of our Saviour's teachings; and they were the first to proclaim this all-powerful efficacy of prayer. They made it their own chief duty, as we shall soon see; but they also recom-

mended themselves urgently to the prayers of their disciples, who were as yet scarcely born to the life of faith.

Listen to St. Paul,<sup>28</sup> as he urges the Ephesians to cease not offering to God all kinds of prayer and supplication in order to keep the fervor of their spirit ever awakened, and to obtain from God by the most urgent entreaties the graces necessary to all the Saints, and for himself in particular the grace of speaking with fruit the words of salvation: *By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit: and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the Saints: and for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the Gospel.* He writes to Philemon: *I hope that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* Again, to the Colossians: *Pray for us also, that God may open unto us a door of speech, to speak the mystery of Christ.*

The first Christians had been formed in the school of the Apostles, and they had the same confidence in the power of prayer. A single fact will be more than sufficient proof for us.

The infant Church was assailed by a storm that threatened to swallow it up. He whom Jesus Christ had placed at the helm, had been snatched away and loaded with chains. To what weapon of deliverance would the abandoned faithful have recourse? The whole Church set itself to pray, and prayed without

<sup>28</sup> Ephes., vi. 18; Philem., 22; Coloss., iv. 3.

ceasing: *Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him.*<sup>29</sup> This seems a weak defence against the iron gates that closed the prison and the soldiers guarding it. But the faithful knew that prayer has in its favor God's Word, *living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword.*<sup>30</sup> Their confidence did not deceive them. Their prayers soon opened the iron gates and broke the Apostle's chains, and gave back to their love him for whom they had wept.

We might gather together many other witnesses in favor of the same truth, if there were need of it. But we will content ourselves with St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies. Leaving aside a multitude of letters in which he demands help from the prayers of his brethren, let us attend to the following passage. He writes it from Japan to his brothers in Rome. "I must tell you that God, more than once, has given me to know, by interior light, that I owe my deliverance from the many perils that have assailed me, both in soul and body, to the prayers and Holy Sacrifices of our Fathers and Brothers—those who are still combating on earth or already triumphing in heaven. I say this to you in order to give God and you, my very dear Brothers, my tribute of thanks, and at the same time to beg you to unite your thanksgiving with mine; for I deny not that I am quite incapable of paying what I owe."

<sup>29</sup> Acts, xii. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Hebrews, iv. 12.

## VIII.

The practice of the Saints—the example of our Lord.

To the authority of words, let us now add that of examples.

Facts proving the power of prayer are beyond number. To undertake to recount them all would be to relate the whole history of the Church. Prayer is the foundation of the holy place, its rampart and defence, its strength and stability. The history of the Jewish and the Christian people alike confirms a truth so important, in the most striking manner. On the mountain top of Sinai, Moses, in the power of prayer, strives against the wrath of the Almighty, Who has resolved to exterminate His people. And the Creator, before His own creature, takes the part of one beseeching: *Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them.*<sup>31</sup> Moses refuses to give Him leave, and God is constrained to yield! What is the power thus superior to God's justice? What can it be but the resistless power with which Divine Mercy endows prayer?

Abraham, in his day, had availed himself of this power, and God in like manner suffered Himself to be vanquished. He accepted every condition which His servant imposed on Him.<sup>32</sup> Sodom itself—the

<sup>31</sup> Exodus, xxii. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *I beseech Thee, saith he [Abraham], be not angry, Lord, if I speak once more. What if ten should be found there [just*

Sodom of abomination—would have owed its salvation to the prayer of a single just man, could it have fulfilled the easy stipulation he had made in its name. All the crimes it had been heaping up for so many generations weighed not so heavily with the Heart of God as lowly and confiding prayer.

Moses, again, standing on the mountain, lifts to heaven his trembling hands upheld by Aaron and Hur, and he secures by his prayer the triumph of his people over Amalec.<sup>33</sup>

When the avenging flames threaten to consume the rebellious multitude which has insolently risen up against God's servants, we see Aaron darting forward, with the censer in his hands, and *standing between the dead and the living* he stretches out against the Lord the weapons of his ministry, and stays the cruel scourge by the ardor of the prayer he sends up to heaven along with the smoke of incense.<sup>34</sup>

Josue desires to complete the victory he has won over his people's enemy. He has recourse to God, and God, says the Holy Scripture, *obeys the voice of the man* who prays. The sun remains motionless so long as prayer withstands its onward course.

By prayer Elias brings down fire from heaven on those who come to seize him in the name of a wicked prince. By prayer, again, Eliseus restores persons in Sodom]? *And He said: I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.* Genesis, xviii. <sup>33</sup> Exodus, xvii.

<sup>34</sup> Numbers, xvi; Wisdom, xviii. 21.

to the widow of Sarepta her only son, whom death had snatched from her affection.<sup>35</sup>

We must not think the wonders wrought in the Church are less numerous or less prodigious. Her annals recall to us on every page the triumph of prayer, which has so justly been called "suppliant omnipotence" (*omnipotentia supplex*). And many a document remains as the unimpeachable witness.

Thus, the feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, of the Transfiguration of our Lord, and of the Holy Rosary, the confraternity of Our Lady of Help and others besides, owe their origin to miracles obtained from the Most High by the invocation of His name.

Without speaking of other cities, where the same prodigy has often been repeated, Rome, under the Pontiff St. Gregory the Great; Milan, under its Archbishop St. Charles Borromeo; Marseilles, under the courageous Bishop Belzunce, saw the plague vanish away before prayer. At Rome the establishment of the Great Litanies called after St. Mark, and at Marseilles the consecration of the city to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, have perpetuated the memory of these signal graces. The prayers called Rogations, first established in Vienne by St. Mamertus and afterward adopted throughout the Church, have a somewhat similar origin.

In the old days Bethulia owed its preservation

<sup>35</sup> Josue, x ; IV. Kings, i. iv.



to the piety of a woman of courage. Paris too has had its Judith; defended by the prayers of Genevieve as by an impregnable fortress, the city escaped the fury of Attila.

But most of all in spiritual things does God love to show forth the power of prayer.

Who is this proud mortal man that marches on surrounded by his many followers, and tasting the sweets of triumph? It is Arius who daringly displays his pride through the city of Constantinople. Heresy claps its hands for joy, and believes that victory is its own. But the Bishop St. Alexander pours forth in the sight of God his tears and sighs; when, struck down by sudden disease, the heresiarch expires in the most dreadful torments, leaving to his partisans for their sole inheritance the stigma of a shameful death, the worthy chastisement of his impiety.

Once more, look at this entire nation embracing the holy religion of the crucified God. What kind of an apostle is it that has converted this unbelieving people to the faith? It is a young slave that has wrought this wonder: the prayers of St. Christiana won for the Iberians the priceless gift of grace and regeneration.

How was it that the South of France escaped the fatal heresy of the Albigenses, and regained the lively faith so characteristic of it, though once it seemed to have lost that faith for ever? Dominic

had recourse to heaven. Under the inspiration of Mary he established the devotion of the Holy Rosary, and what the combined armies of Catholic princes could not obtain, was the fruit of prayer.

The words of the Holy Spirit are indeed true: *Pray, one for another, that you may be saved: for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much.*<sup>36</sup>

Some may find these events too far remote from our own day, and will desire to see them confirmed by more recent facts. To them we would say—Look at England. Only a few years have passed since prayers were organized to demand from heaven the conversion of this people, whose influence would make so easy the conversion of the entire world. And, behold! the Catholic element has already developed itself with a swiftness as consoling to Catholics as it is frightening to the heads of the Anglican Church. Numerous and splendid conversions have shaken to its base the edifice raised up by the schismatical hand of Henry VIII. Disquieting doubts have been awakened in naturally upright hearts. Sooner or later they will give place to the clear light of truth, which seems to be sought after in good faith. Science and reflection will give back England to Catholicity. It is prayer which has made ready the way for this triumph, prayer is now hastening it forward by its desires, and prayer will some day crown it—such is our hope.

<sup>36</sup> St. James, v. 16.

[Father Ramière's long residence in England made him familiar with the Catholic revival which followed on the Oxford Movement of 1833. The union of prayers to which he alludes was inaugurated throughout Europe shortly before that time by a convert to the faith, the Honorable and Reverend George Spencer, an uncle of the present Lord Spencer, and afterward widely known as the Passionist Father Ignatius. The foregoing page was written thirty years since, and the intervening time has materially changed—not always for the better—the religious life of England. Father Ramière, until the end, kept his bright hopes of what he fondly called “the resurrection and progress of Catholicity in England.” And, in spite of infidelity and a very practical atheism that has come up under the specious title of Agnosticism, it is certain that the movement of return toward the Catholic Church on the part of the thoughtful and, as we may say, more Christian Protestants in England, has gone on constantly increasing. Cardinal Newman, who has had so large a part in this work, described it forty years ago as a “Second Spring.” To one who compares the present condition of Catholics in England with their condition at the time when Father Spencer was organizing his union of prayers, the next to miraculous progress made will be apparent. At that time conversions to Catholicity were wellnigh as rare as to the religion of Mahomet, and were scarcely more respected. Catholics had little or no part in the intellectual life of the country, their opinions were not considered worthy of notice by reasonable minds, their faith was regarded as a worn-out superstition, and socially, with the exception of a few noble families that had never given up the religion of their God to embrace the religion of their king, they were outside the pale of respectable society. At present, with all drawbacks and difficulties taken into account, the change is far greater than was the change, in a similar period of time, during the Christianization of the Roman Empire.]

There is now no member of the English-reading public throughout the world who does not know that Catholic writers of eminence have appeared, having something to say in their own defence on reasonable grounds. What is more, there are few families wherein there have not been conversions to the Faith. No matter what may have been the defections due to worldliness and lack of suitable instruction among Catholics themselves, it is certain that faith has been made easier to millions of souls, and a natural groundwork laid for that supernatural turning of a whole people to God, which in any case must be the result of His own immediate action by a special outpouring of grace. It has been one of the chief "Intentions" of the League of the Sacred Heart, in which the Apostleship of Prayer is organized, to draw down such grace from heaven.]

But there is no need of dwelling longer on this point at a time when the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories daily records new wonders and, like a wide-spreading tree, brings forth <sup>3</sup>fruits of salvation, not only in France where it sprang up, but throughout the world. What gave birth to the Archconfraternity if not prayer? It was first conceived at the foot of the altar by the holy priest who, in its establishment, was the worthy minister of the mercies of Mary. It was in prayer and through prayer that it took so rapid and so wonderful a development. It is through prayer that, day by day, it obtains results so consoling. To the pious annals of the Archconfraternity we refer those among our readers who desire to obtain an exact idea of the power of prayer for the salvation of souls. There they will see

what it can do for the conversion of the most hardened sinners. There they may admire the marvels that grace has wrought in hearts. Afflictions the most cruel softened or dispelled, the sick cured, or happily prepared for a holy death, whole parishes changed or renewed, such are the fruits which this work, inspired and blessed by heaven, is constantly bringing forth.

[ When this was written of the union of prayers "for the conversion of sinners" in the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, founded by the venerated Abbé Desgenettes in the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, Father Ramière could not yet foresee the wonderful continuation of this work and its spread to every corner of the globe, which was to be made through his own *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. This became the periodical organ of the Apostleship of Prayer, when it was organized into the League of the Sacred Heart. All these *Messengers*—now numbering twenty-nine in fourteen different languages—furnish means to the Associates of the League for recommending their special needs or "Intentions" to prayers. Besides this, they recommend each month a "General Intention" connected with some great need of the Church. The latter has been chosen, of late years, by the Sovereign Pontiff himself. It is impossible to say how far these General Intentions have been granted; though in some cases, notably in that of the Mission of Madagascar, so sorely tried some years since, the Director General of the League has received the thanks of the missionaries, who attribute the perseverance of their Christians under cruel difficulties to the Apostleship of Prayer. But the "Thanksgivings for Graces obtained," offered by simple Associates of the League, have been a source of constant edification to all the readers of the *Messengers*.

In a serious work issued by a learned religious of the Order to which Father Ramière belonged, this wholesale answer to prayer, as it were, verified through the recommendation of Intentions in the various *Messengers*, has been chosen as a shining proof that this is indeed the "Age of the Sacred Heart." It is one of three proofs derived from Father Ramière's work:

1. The Apostleship of Prayer united with the devotion of the Sacred Heart (into a *League*) has rendered the spread of this devotion easy and universal.

2. The quite new means employed of devoting periodicals to the worship of the Sacred Heart and the Apostleship of Prayer, in various languages, has spread far and wide among all Christians these *Messengers of the Sacred Heart*.

3. As an effect of the foregoing, the Catholic people, now more than ever before, in their various misfortunes and necessities of life have recourse to the Heart of Jesus; and a vast number of them obtain what they ask and make it known through the *Messengers*, by "countless thanksgivings for graces obtained." —Father Costa Rossetti, *De Spiritu Societatis Jesu*, pp. 112-3.]

Thus the present, like the past, loudly proclaims the boundless power of Catholic prayer. The whole history of the Church justifies those words of the holy Apostle which we have but now recalled: *Pray, one for another, that you may be saved; for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much before God.*

Thus, too, we find that the Saints, however numerous their occupations, always faithfully asked from heaven what they could not find on earth—light and grace for themselves and for the souls they were laboring to save. Sometimes their day, filled by the imperative demands of a ministry that

absorbed all their leisure, was not enough for their pious and burning desire of prayer. Then night came to their aid; its silence and darkness were favorable to their communication with God. We cannot understand how such men as Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul, Francis Xavier, Alphonsus Liguori, could conceive so many and so vast undertakings for God's glory. And yet these apostolic men, whose incredible labors amaze and confound us, consecrated to prayer a great portion of their time. They were so far from finding in the manifold occupations of their ministry a reason for being dispensed from prayer, that they found therein a new motive for giving themselves up to this holy exercise. They understood that, without prayer, the apostolic man is a soldier without arms. They understood too that, since God is the Master of hearts, you will further the conversion of sinners more by pleading their cause with this Sovereign Master, than could be done by any other means whatsoever.

Why should we be astonished at this behavior of the Saints, when we see the Apostles themselves giving prayer the preference over all their other ministries? They were not sufficient for their varied occupations, and so chose seven deacons, entrusting to them important offices. What was it they kept for themselves? What was the ministry which in their eyes was more important than all others, by reason of its excellence and its results? *As to our-*

*selves*, they say, *we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*<sup>37</sup> To speak to God in the name of men, to speak to men in the name of God; to plead with God the cause of sinners, and to defend before sinners the interests of their Master and make known to them His will; this is the whole duty of the Apostle.

Soon after, we find them dividing up the world and going through it with giant strides, to establish everywhere the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The entire universe fell a conquest to these twelve fishermen. What was the victorious arm that triumphed thus over error and corruption, leagued together against the holy doctrine of the Gospel? It was prayer and the word of God; for—*As to ourselves, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.*

The Apostles prayed, but they did not pray alone. A heart far more apostolic than their own sent heavenward prayers of far greater efficacy. While they were fighting the combats of Jesus Christ at every point of the globe, Mary upheld them all by the power of her prayers, and drew down on them from heaven the victory. She lifted to the throne of her Divine Son those hands of a Mother, bringing thence the floods of grace which secured so wonderful a success to the labors of the Apostles, of whom she is the Queen. Mary prayed, and her prayers—

<sup>37</sup> Acts, vi. 4.



let us not hesitate to say it—co-operated more powerfully in the conversion of the world than the labors of those worthy instruments whom God's grace had chosen to realize this great work. This is a most encouraging example for a great number of religious souls who cannot otherwise put in practice the zeal which devours them. They will find in prayer, as did Mary, an unfailing means of bringing aid to so many hapless victims of ignorance and impiety.

The example of the Apostles and of the great Mother of God is surely enough to impress all our hearts. But there is another example, greater still, more wonderful, and more solemn. Let us lift our thoughts higher, and consider the Divine Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

At the age of life when man is quite outside of all social relations, without strength and activity and almost without faculties, when he has as yet but a half-existence buried in the darkness of an obscure and unnoticed childhood, what was our Divine Saviour doing? He had freely subjected Himself to the humiliating law imposed on us by our physical weakness in the first days of our existence. He was mute toward men, but He spoke in our behalf to God His Father, and from that time was busied with our salvation. Even in the womb of His Mother, the God-Man loved us. He prayed for us, and the burning desires of His Heart besought our pardon.

During the long years of His hidden life in Nazareth, what was He doing still? His feeble arms were employed in painful labor that the world would have thought unworthy of a God, but Jesus the while was loving and praying. Jesus prayed—and this is why at Nazareth, quite as surely as on Calvary, He was working out the salvation of men.

Nazareth! The very name says more to prove the excellence of the Apostleship of Prayer than every discourse and any number of reasonings. These thirty years of hidden life are incomprehensible, unless we look on them as the shining proof of the power possessed by the most menial toil, provided it is animated by zeal and prayer, for obtaining grace from heaven and for saving souls. In truth, the Word of God came down from heaven solely for this purpose—to save souls. This alone was unceasingly *His work before Him*.<sup>38</sup> At this He worked unceasingly, and in the way the most productive of effect—for in view of this had been planned His whole existence. Who can deny it? And yet, if we admit this, we must also grant that when our Saviour gave up thirty years to the Apostleship of Prayer and only three to the Apostleship of the Word, it was because He saw in the former a means as efficient, and even more powerful, for fulfilling His divine mission.

<sup>38</sup> *Isaias, lxii. 11.*

What He saw He desires we also shall see. His whole life is a teaching for us. We should gather up, with deepest attention, each one of His words and His least actions as so many lessons, taking them as the rule of our conduct. What are we to say of this long lesson of thirty years? It should be enough to draw us from a foolish mistake, which unhappily is so common, that leads us to measure the efficiency and merit of works by the splendor of their outward seeming and the greatness of their visible results.

Moreover, this Apostleship of Prayer, which was the sole occupation of our Saviour during the thirty years of His hidden life, was in no wise interrupted when He entered on the course of His public life. On the contrary, by more special prayer followed up for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, He made His immediate preparation for the ministry of preaching. And in the course of this holy ministry, often do we see Him retiring apart, to pray more freely in solitude. By prayer He prepared Himself for choosing His Apostles. To prayer He gave whole nights, and in prayer He sought the rest of which He was in need after the weariness of the day. What, after all, were His journeys, His preaching, His labors of every kind, but an unbroken prayer?

Is anything else needed to convince us? Surely, we can no longer doubt the merit, excelling all other, that belongs to the Apostleship of Prayer.

For we see our Divine Model, after consecrating exclusively to it the thirty years of His hidden life, still giving up to it the better part of the three years of His public life. Yet these already seemed scant enough for the Apostleship of the Word.

## IX.

Causes of the little result of our prayers—qualities they should have.

From what we have seen, the whole life of our Saviour appears to be a confirmation beyond dispute of the privileges He has granted to prayer, of the praises He has bestowed upon it, of the solemn promises He has made in its favor.

After this striking witness, what can still be wanting to win from our own spirit and heart and will their full assent? Yet it must be acknowledged there may be wanting a testimony which, however inferior in its kind to that of the Word of God, would not be less decisive for ourselves; I mean the witness borne by our own experience.

Unhappily, this testimony seems to give the lie to the divine promises. We have prayed, and we have not been heard. We have sought, and we have not found. We have knocked, and the door has not been opened to our entreaties. This it is that discourages us; this makes it almost impossible for us to have such confidence in the assurances of our Saviour, positive though they be, as they ought to inspire in us.

How shall we offset this witness? Is there no reply to be made to it? Far from it. That which is clearly in opposition to the words of Supreme

Truth can be nothing else than an illusion. We need not go back to what has been proved already, namely, that prayers offered for the salvation of sinners may be heard in whatever relates to God or touches ourselves, without however obtaining their full effect, on account of the free resistance made by those for whom they were offered. As to ourselves, we have the merit of our prayer as largely, perhaps more so than if our desires had been realized. On His side, God has done everything necessary to bring light and life to the souls we have recommended to His mercy. But if these souls freely prefer darkness to light and death to life, what right have we to complain to heaven of their unhappy state?

I might add that perhaps our prayers are already fully heard in the divine decrees, although their effect has not yet appeared to our eyes. We are citizens of time, and shut up in this swift-passing instant called the Present. We are impatient to lay hold of that which is promised us. That which awaits us in the future has scarcely any value for us. Even in our relations with God we should like to impose upon Him the laws of our own impatience. There is nothing more unjust than this. If we wish God to hear us, we must suffer Him to hear us in His own way—as God. This is the least that a beggar can do, when He Who is rich has willed to share with him all His treasures; he must await the moment fixed by the wisdom of his generous Benefactor.

Nothing is more pleasing to God than such patience ; and nothing is more strongly recommended in the Holy Scriptures.

Let us not then be in a hurry to say that we have not been heard. Let us believe, on the contrary, that we have been heard, or shall be, without fail. Such filial confidence will of itself be sufficient to obtain from God the grace He may have refused us until now. On the other hand, the distrust which should lead us to bring premature accusations against His goodness, would be enough to deprive us of the gifts He might be ready to grant to our entreaties.

1.—This, in reality, is the commonest cause of the little power of our prayers over the Heart of God. They want the conditions to which their efficiency is attached, especially that *lively faith* and *firm confidence* which are the foremost of these conditions.

Our Lord tells us in the most express terms : *All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.* And again : *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe, . . and they shall come unto you.* It is in this wise the Apostles understood the promises made in favor of prayer by their Divine Master. Thus St. James interpreted them : *If any of you want wisdom, he says to the faithful, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him. But*

*let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind; Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.*<sup>39</sup>

Everyone can see that prayer without confidence is rather an insult than a homage to Divine Goodness. What father would not look on it as an outrage from his son, if he saw him asking distrustfully for the bread necessary to life, or for a remedy to restore his health? To ask with distrust for the blessings of the supernatural order from Him Who has shown Himself so prodigal of air and light, of all necessities and superfluities even in the natural order, would suppose that He sets less store by the life and health of our souls than by the life and health of our bodies. It would put us in opposition with all created nature, and would deny to God what He finds in the animals and plants that accept food and refreshment without fear from His hands. To hesitate in hoping all things from God, when He has not hesitated to give us His only Son, yielding Him up for us unto death, is to call in question His love for the One in Whom He is well pleased. It taxes Him with an inconsistency of which the lowest of men would be incapable. It supposes Him indifferent to the only interest He can have at heart in governing His creatures—the interest of His glory and of the glory of the Incarnate Word—since this

<sup>39</sup> St. Matthew, xxi. 22; St. Mark, xi. 24; St. James, i.



interest is bound up, beyond possibility of separation, with our own salvation.

But let us well understand it—faith, which is the condition of the efficiency of our prayers and the great means of obtaining the blessings of the supernatural order, is itself a supernatural gift, and must consequently itself be the fruit of prayer.

We must also beware of seeing in this mutual dependence of prayer and faith a kind of vicious circle that we can never break through. We should see in it, on the contrary, the most comforting of all the aids given to us who find not yet in our hearts that confidence without limits, not to be shaken, all-powerful, which animated the Saints and made them able to move mountains, to command nature and obtain all things from God.

Let us not be surprised that our heart, of itself, does not bring forth so divine a fruit. It is from heaven it must come to us. It is in the bosom of God we must seek it, or rather, we must receive it from God's hand. For God unceasingly offers us this light of faith and this quickening air of hope, with the same liberality with which He surrounds us with the air of our atmosphere and the light of the sun. We are to gather up what he gives us at the present moment, and make use of it for obtaining more. We are to say with the blind man: *Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.* Or, with the Apostles: *Increase my faith.* Such prayer will be heard with-

out fail, for in this case it is indeed the true wisdom which God gives to all with a bounty that does not count its gifts.

2.—God will listen to us so much the more willingly as our prayer possesses in higher degree another quality not less pleasing to our Lord than confidence itself. This should be much easier to our weakness, since it is its natural fruit—I mean *humility*.

This is the second source of the power of our prayers. We have already said that prayer in a way obliges God to show forth all His liberality and magnificence of design toward us. This is because prayer allows us to make use of all the energy of our will, and yet keeps us in that utter dependence on God which is the true relation of the creature to its Creator. Magnificence is God's nature, and liberality His essential tendency. It costs Him therefore much less to give than to refuse. But He cannot put Himself in opposition with Himself, and consent to His gifts becoming helps to falsehood. God is truth, and He cannot turn a favorable ear to His creatures unless they abide in the truth. Now the truth is that the creature is nothing, and that God alone is. If we keep ourselves in our own nothingness, Divine Goodness will look on us with pleasure. *Truth is sprung out of the earth, and justice hath looked down from heaven.—The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds,* says the Wise Man. Just so far as the Most High

shows Himself removed from the proud, so far He is disposed to give His grace to the humble. *God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace.* Their prayers never fail to draw down His favor, and their entreaties are never repelled. *He hath regard to the prayer of the humble; and He hath not despised their petition.*<sup>40</sup>

Look at the two men who pray together in the temple. One is famous by his learning and illustrious by his good works. With incorruptible zeal he defends the teachings of the Law and the least tradition he has received from his fathers. He burdens himself with many sacrifices; he makes long prayers in the temple and in the public places, and he gives to the poor a great portion of his goods. The other, on the contrary, belongs to an ill-famed class, and he has shared in all the guilty practices which have brought down on the members of his profession a just and universal contempt. In place of good works, he has hardly anything to show to God besides his extortions. Instead of sacrifices, he has only his faults. But this man so despised and so contemptible is humble. He acknowledges his unworthiness before God, while the former, so enlightened and so esteemed, is proud and attributes his virtues to himself. What happens? What is the fruit of prayer in either case? Our Saviour tells us. It is the

<sup>40</sup> Psalm lxxxiv. 12; Ecclesiasticus, xxxv. 21; Proverbs, iii. 34, St. James, iv. 6, I. St. Peter, v. 5; Psalm ci. 18.

second who comes forth from the temple justified, and the first leaves it condemned: *Because*, adds our Divine Master, *everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*<sup>41</sup>

God as our Teacher could scarcely make us understand better how far the humility of our prayers can go toward supplying the defect of every other claim that might render them worthy of being heard. But He had already taught us this truth, and in a manner far more touching, by His Incarnation itself.

Who can doubt the resistless attraction which the humility of prayer exercises over God's Heart, when we see Himself drawn by its charm and coming down from heaven upon the earth? It is the humility of Mary which gave to Divine Goodness the most powerful co-operation in realizing this work, precious beyond all others.

Gabriel, the Angel of the Incarnation, had already been sent to the prophet Daniel. It was a time when the holy man, humbling himself in sackcloth and ashes, was doing tearful penance for the sins of his people, which he took upon himself as if he had committed them.<sup>42</sup> Prayer like this won the

<sup>41</sup> St. Luke, xviii. 14.

<sup>42</sup> *I set my face to the Lord my God, to pray and make supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. Now while I was yet speaking and praying and confessing my sins and the sins of my people Israel, and presenting my supplications in the sight of my God, . . . behold the man Gabriel.* Daniel, ix.

Heart of God. The Archangel came to announce to the Prophet that, in view of the desires, so ardent and so humble, which he had sent up to heaven, the time marked in the divine decrees should be shortened and the coming of the Redeemer hastened.

After sixty-four weeks of years, again Gabriel is sent by Divine Mercy. But it is no longer to a prophet that he is to show himself; it is to the creature predestined to become the Mother of her Creator. He comes to place her in possession of a dignity that shall lift her infinitely above all created greatness. He comes to announce the fulfilment of the great mystery prepared from the beginning of time. But this mystery of love cannot be realized unless Mary co-operates in it; and her humility is to pronounce the deciding word. When the Queen of heaven and earth shall declare herself the handmaid of the Lord, and in humility without compare shall pronounce the *fiat* for which God waits, then the new world shall be created. The *fiat* of Divine Omnipotence made this light which we see, and brought the universe forth from chaos. The *fiat* of the humility of Mary made to shine upon the earth the Uncreated Light of the Word, and brought forth marvels of grace from the chaos of sin. Thus to her humility alone, under God, does Mary assign this great work. *He hath regarded, she says, the humility of His handmaid.*<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> St. Luke, i. 48.

All the privileges of Mary doubtless helped to make her the worthy spouse of the Heavenly Father and the temple of the Holy Ghost. All her virtues counted for something in the sweet fragrance of her prayers, and in the strength they had to bring down the Word of God. But her humility has had the chief share in this great work ; and it could not be otherwise. For was it not meet that the humility of the new Eve should repair the ruin wrought by the pride of the first virgin and the first mother ?

This is the perfect model of the Apostleship of Prayer which is now set before us. For us there is question of completing the work which the humility of the prayers of Daniel had prepared, and the humility of the prayers of Mary has fulfilled. There is question of obtaining the perfect outpouring of those graces which have been placed in all their fulness in the bosom of Mary, and which only wait to be poured forth. Their channel must be the humility of our own prayers. We too must weep for our sins and those of our people. We must confess ourselves unworthy of God's mercy, even while we entreat it with the greatest earnestness. Let us not doubt that thereby we shall be able to shorten the time and hasten the world's salvation.

3.—A third quality which will secure the success of our prayers, and the absence of which would easily explain their inefficiency, is *perseverance*.

Perseverance in prayer is necessary for the exer-

cise of faith. For what merit could our faith have, if grace were granted to the very first desires of the soul? Often perseverance is needful for training up the disposition of him who prays to that degree of mature perfection which is characteristic of good will. St. Augustine says: "When God delays the granting of what you ask, He stretches out your desires; and the soul thus reaching forward becomes capable of greater graces."

And again: "Seek, ask, urge; by seeking and asking you will grow more capacious for receiving. God withholds what He does not wish to give speedily, that you may learn to desire great things after a great manner."

What hunger and thirst are to the body, desire is to the soul. The measure of satiety is that of hunger; and this is why our Lord has said: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.* It is the goodness of God that so often delays hearing our prayers. This is a way to make us esteem His grace the more, and to make us desire it more sincerely and merit to receive it more plentifully. Let us also add with St. Augustine, that God sometimes delays granting the favor we ask of Him, only to give it at the proper time when it shall be of real advantage to the soul.

Persevere, therefore, in prayer, for our Divine Teacher instructs us *always to pray, and not to faint.*<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Tract. 4 in Psalm; Serm. 5 de Verb. Dom.; 102 in Joan.; St. Matthew, v. 6; St. Luke, xviii. 1.*

We are to persevere in prayer, for it is impossible to keep asking God for help and not receive it; to reach out to Him and never to obtain. Perseverance, therefore, in prayer makes sure, in a way, of perseverance in grace and, consequently, of a good death.

Moreover, it is not so difficult as we might imagine to practise the bidding given us: *We ought always to pray*. St. Thomas says: "The beginning of prayer is the desire for charity, whence prayer should proceed. And this ought to be continually within us, either in act or in the heart's disposition. Such a disposition is found in all our actions that are done out of charity."

St. Augustine likewise teaches us how, by faith and hope and charity as by a continual desire, we cease not to pray.

The holy Doctor then explains our Lord's recommendation in the Gospel—not to multiply words in our prayer. "To pray long," he says, "is not to pray with many words. It is one thing to have *plenty of words*, and quite another to have *lasting affection* in the heart. It is written of our Lord that *He was persevering in prayer*, and that, *being in an agony, He prayed the longer*, that He might give us an example. Let much speech be absent from prayer, but let there not be wanting much praying, so long as earnest fervor remains. For to speak much while praying is to treat of necessary things



with unnecessary words. For the most part, an affair of this kind is done by the sighing of the heart rather than by the speech of the mouth.”<sup>45</sup>

The conditions we have thus explained are required in order that we may reckon on prayer having its effect. We are not to forget that, once these conditions are fulfilled, it is *impossible*—this is the expression of St. Thomas—that we should not obtain what we ask. Therefore, if we would not give the lie to the words of Eternal Truth—a thing which cannot even enter into our mind—we must hold for certain that, as often as we pray with these conditions, our prayers are heard, though perhaps they seem to be without effect. We must believe this just as we believe all the mysteries of our holy religion. The more unapproachable the mystery is to our senses, the more consoling it is to our faith.

<sup>45</sup> St. Luke, xviii. 1; S. Th., 2. 2., q. 33, a. 14; S. Aug., *Epistola 121*.

## X.

Summary of all that has been said on prayer.

Prayer is the efficacious means given to man by which he is to bring down into his weak heart the all-powerful grace of God. It is the essential condition of supernatural life; it is that means of our salvation which is *easiest*, yet most *indispensable*, the most *universal* as well as the most *powerful*. By prayer man draws near to God, and exercises in behalf of his brethren an apostleship that is useful and excellently fruitful. By virtue of the promises made in its favor, prayer when endowed with the necessary qualities has a boundless efficacy. Its results are without fail, and its action knows scarcely any other limitation than the infinite goodness and power of God. The malice of a will, become obstinate in evil, may, it is true, under certain circumstances make barren the most precious graces. But it is not less certain that the heavenly treasures were laid open to this criminal will by the key of prayer. If the faithful and suppliant soul which interests itself in a sinner's salvation, does not weary of praying and hoping, if by generous sacrifices it knows how to buy and to give payment for a victory which, in God's designs, must sometimes be the price of heroic confidence, of suffering and blood, it is difficult and wellnigh impossible that, sooner or later, this soul

shall not receive the reward of its persevering efforts. The exceptions to this rule will never be aught else than exceptions. For the power of prayer is that of charity and of love, and *love is strong as death*.

Moreover, the great day that shall unveil the mysteries of God's justice, shall also unveil the secrets of His mercy and the miracles of grace won by those prayers to which God seemed deaf. Then, most of all, God shall justify the truth of His promises, and He shall triumph over the unjust accusations of distrust. *That Thou mayest be justified in Thy words, and mayest overcome when Thou art judged.*

Let us wait for this day with patience, and waiting let us pray and hope. *From the morning watch even until night: let Israel hope in the Lord. Because with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him plentiful redemption.*<sup>46</sup>

It is told of a famous mathematician of antiquity that, struck with the results obtained by the action of the lever, he said: "Give me a support and a lever, and I will lift the world for you." He asked for what was impossible, that he might realize what was useless. No, it is not the physical world we must try to lift, but the moral world. It is the souls fallen from their first greatness and wallowing in the mire, that must be regenerated and placed like stars in heaven. It is fallen man, the vile slave of the lowest passions, who has become, as it were, material,

<sup>46</sup> Canticles, viii. 6; Psalm l. 5, cxxix. 9.

that must be raised up, spiritualized, made divine. This is the grand work undertaken by God made Man—to save men; and it is the work which His ministers are to carry on, and in the success of which every Christian should take his part.

We are happier than Archimedes, inasmuch as we have found a *support* that was wanting to him; and the powerful *lever*, which he uselessly demanded, has been placed in our hands.

The *point of support* is God Himself, that is, His infallible Word, His promises which shall remain unshaken even though the heavens and the earth pass away.

The *lever* is *prayer*—prayer to which God has given the right of commanding His infinite goodness and wisdom and power.

What we have said is enough to make us understand both how solid is our support and how strong our lever.

But this strength, immense as it is of itself, can yet be increased. The lever gains power by so much the more as the arm is longer and a greater number of hands join together to put it in motion. In the same way, prayer has a power so much the more resistless over the Heart of God as it is set to work by a greater number of souls. It is this means of increasing beyond all limit the power of prayer which we are to explain in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

### SECOND SOURCE OF POWER : **ASSOCIATION.**

ANALYSIS. I. *Our Lord's promises to prayer in common.*  
Example in the Lord's Prayer.

II. *Motives of the promises.* Nature of the most Holy Trinity—Its manifestation in men—need of our own nature.

III. *Association, a source of strength.* Examples in the physical and moral order.

IV. *Power of association in the supernatural order.* The Church, a supernatural society—examples from her history, association of minds, hearts, wills, persons—fulfilment of our Lord's last prayer.

V. *Fearful power of association of the wicked.* Army of Satan—activity and unity against the Church—secret societies.

VI. *Conclusion.* Need of new association of Christians by union of souls—example of Propagation of the Faith—its success, from association—nature of help it finds in Apostleship of Prayer. Double support, material and spiritual, of the Apostleship of the Word.

## I.

Promises of our Lord to prayer made in common.

We assign power to association, and we must search out the reason for this. But first let us make sure of the reality of this power.

Our Divine Teacher shall Himself give us this assurance. In collectedness of mind we should give ear to His words: *Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father Who is in heaven.*

Thereupon He explains to us that particular efficiency which is added to prayer by association. It is because where two hearts are united together to pray, there also is a third Heart that prays with them, and Its prayer cannot fail of being heard by God the Father. This Heart is His own. He is always present to each one of His members, but present most of all with those who form among themselves a closer union. *For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.* So too, when He teaches us how to pray, He does not suffer us ever to separate ourselves from the society of our brethren. He wishes that our prayer should always be a common prayer. *Thus therefore, He says, shall you pray: OUR Father Who art in heaven, give us this day OUR daily bread.*

*Forgive US OUR sins. . . . Lead US not into temptation, but deliver US from evil.*

This is the divine form of prayer, first pronounced by the Saviour of the world, and thence finding a place on the lips of everyone of the faithful. This is the Catholic prayer, excellent above all others.

St. Cyprian notes : " We do not say when we pray, *My Father*, but *Our Father*. We do not say *give me*, but *give us*. For *the Teacher of unity* was not willing that each one should pray for himself alone. He desired that each should pray for all, because in Himself alone He bore all men,"—and in Him, consequently, all men are but one.<sup>1</sup>

But it is not enough to believe this truth ; we must also strive to understand it. So far from there being any presumption on our part in searching into the deep counsels of Divine Goodness, gratitude makes it our duty to fill ourselves with the knowledge of them, that we may thus be in a state to co-operate with them according to the measure of our strength.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, xviii. 19, 20 ; id., vi., St. Luke, xi ; St. Cypr., *de orat. Dom.*

## II.

Motives of the promises made in favor of association, drawn from God's nature.

We must acknowledge that, in the kingdom of God's mercy through which we now take our way, we go on from mystery to mystery. But they are the mysteries of love, giving answer to those innermost instincts of our heart which are likewise the most irresistible. These mysteries reconcile all the contradictions of our nature. Man is infinitely weak, and yet he has within himself the instinct of power. He lives only in the present, and yet he feels the need of being made sure of the future. He is poor beyond measure, and it is necessary for him that he should be made rich. Here then are so many depths of misery and nothingness that *call on the deeps* of perfection and of greatness.<sup>2</sup> Prayer satisfies this call. It sets up a communication between the depth of littleness and human weakness and the great deep of the perfection and riches and power of God. By this channel, as it were, the Infinite pours Itself forth into nothingness and fills it with Itself.

God now reveals to us yet another secret that may lift us up to His own level. To be like unto God it is not enough that we should be immortal like Him, and like Him sovereignly rich and powerful. We must also be able to share these good things

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xli. 8.



with others like ourselves, who in their turn shall give them back to us. From this exchange made by the many hearts that are one in the bond of charity, there arises a blessedness greater beyond compare than that which springs from the selfish contemplation and enjoyment of one's own riches. Thus is it in the ineffable society of the Three Divine Persons—in that communication, eternal, continual, complete, made to each other of all their good things—wherein is found the perfection and bliss of God. Power, wisdom, goodness, all divine attributes are in God the Father in an infinite degree. Yet these attributes have their activity only inasmuch as they are communicated to the Word and to the Holy Ghost; and this communication is as necessary to God as His infinity itself. God would not be God, were He solitary; and although each of the Divine Persons is infinite, yet for each there would be an infinite want if, by an impossible supposition, It existed alone—for that supreme perfection and sovereign bliss which consists in sharing happiness, would be wanting to It.

With this mystery of the society of the Three Divine Persons—the most sublime mystery of our faith—is related the highest mystery of our own nature.

Everything in us seems to condemn us to selfishness, yet a resistless want impels us to society. If we were to trust our senses, and to a certain degree our

reason, it would seem that strength and life and happiness are to be found in shutting ourselves up in ourselves, and in bringing to ourselves everything else. Yet our best instincts lead us, in spite of self, to go forth out of ourselves and to live in others, and to seek in our union with them a strength and fulness and contentment which we cannot find in ourselves alone.

To him who knows not the Divine Trinity, this is a mystery beyond conception, a contradiction without explanation. For the perfection of man consists in bringing himself the nearest possible to God. If God, then, should find His blessedness in shutting Himself up in self and enjoying self, it is clear that in this also—in supreme selfishness—the sovereign happiness of man should be found. But all Christians know by faith that, even in God, life, and consequently happiness which is the fulness of life, exist only on condition of communicating themselves; and so we cannot wonder that He has made it impossible for us to enjoy alone our own perfection and happiness, and that He has given to association the power of multiplying an hundredfold our strength and our riches.

Thus the mystery of the Divine Trinity—which is itself beyond all explaining—explains to us, along with many other mysteries of nature and of grace, that which occupies us at this moment, the mystery of association and its immeasurable power.

By prayer every Christian is put in possession of the almightiness of God. But just as God the Father cannot exercise alone the infinite power which is His by the necessity of His nature, so the Christian cannot exercise alone that limitless power which belongs to him through prayer. If he desires that it should act without fail, he must unite in his prayer other hearts enkindled like his own with the spirit of charity. In accordance with faith, our reason itself tells us that, once we admit the doctrine of the Trinity, things cannot be otherwise. For that almighty power of pleading, which is given us by prayer, can work only by those laws which are obeyed by the almightiness that belongs to the nature of God.

## III.

Association, a source of strength in every order of things.

From that uncreated world which is in God, let us lower our gaze to the created world that surrounds us. There we shall find at every step traces of that law which rules the Divine Nature Itself. Everywhere we shall see the most striking proofs of the resistless force given by association to the weakest creatures.

What is weaker than a fibre of hemp or flax? A breath is enough to break it in twain. But twist together a sufficient number, and you have cables strong enough to drag along ships. What has less resistance than a drop of water? Under the least pressure it falls back and flows away. Yet when a sufficient number of drops of water unite together, you see the most solidly constructed dykes yield before their impetuous onrush, and buildings which cannon would scarcely demolish fall as if they were but straw; while giant trees and rocks of enormous size are whirled along like grains of sand, and whole valleys are devastated, and even mountains upturned from their foundations. Entire armies have been put to flight by swarms of the least and feeblest of insects. And to what must we assign the frightful power of wind, and the yet more wonderful power of steam, if not to union—to the association of elements without power of themselves and the least within our grasp?

If this is the case, how can we be astonished that what is the most powerful thing in the world—the will of man—should gain by association so great a power?

In fact, it is especially in the moral order that association unfolds all its energy and works veritable miracles. It is to association that we look for the satisfaction of our physical needs and the development of our intellectual faculties. How many hands had to associate together to make the simplest garment we wear, from the hand of the shepherd feeding the sheep, whose fleece furnished its material, to the hand of the workman that cut its different pieces and sewed them together! How many arms were wearied in making the morsel of bread that is the prime element of our food! The greatest genius would be but an idiot, did not the genius of all society brood over him, and by a motherly process of incubation develop in him the faculties he holds from God and the seeds of knowledge which nature has put in his way. All progress in the arts, all marvels of industry, all great deeds recorded in history, every monument of architecture, and the structure of the sciences, of a harmony so different from the building of stone or marble—what are they all but so many shining proofs of the power beyond compare of association, and of the sublime application of that law which the Creator proclaimed on the world's first day: *It is not good for man to be alone: Let Us make him a help like unto himself!*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Genesis, ii. 18.

## IV.

The power of association in the supernatural order.

We ought by this time to understand one thing. God has wished to do a work diviner than all His other works: it has pleased Him to call men to become infinitely more like to Him than they could expect to be from their own nature. Doing this, He has been obliged to call on them to form among themselves a society which, infinitely more than is the case in all natural associations, is like to that society of light and love which He comprises in Himself and which makes His own perfection and blessedness. We ought no longer to wonder that He has granted to the supernatural associating together of souls privileges that are really divine, and that He has clothed it with the power of working by prayer all that He has wrought Himself in virtue of His Divinity.

This society of souls, this perfect image of the Divine Trinity on earth, this work divine among all others, in which the energy of association has been intensified to its highest degree, is the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Consider the growth of this little mustard seed, whence there has sprung forth the giant tree which now covers the earth with its branches. See how weak were its beginnings, how few its first elements, how

powerful its enemies, how fearful the difficulties it had to conquer. Think of the attacks the Church has endured, the persecutions she has undergone, the victories she has won. Consider the strength of her constitution, the persevering energy of her action, the miracles she has wrought. Whence comes this superhuman power of hers? From association, but from an association the most perfect we can imagine. For it is the association of *minds* in the same faith, of *hearts* in the same desire and the same love, of *wills* in the same obedience to, and fulfilment of, the same law, of *persons*, last of all, in the unity of the same interests, of the same hopes, and of the same manner of life.

Yes, it is this that has made the Catholic Church strong within and without, invincible before her enemies, all-powerful in behalf of her children, victorious over the attacks of hell, never to be shaken in the midst of the assaults directed against her by the powers of earth. And while through the world all fails and vanishes away, the Church, hovering over the ruins which death heaps up around her, with majesty passes through the centuries, ever living and ever vigorous.

To this Catholic association the world owes the light which shines upon it, the grace which gives it life, the virtues which honor it, the multiple works with which charity gives solace to its miseries. Through association every heavenly treasure, holiness

and peace and happiness, are poured out on all the faithful children of the Church. From this fruitful root spring forth, like so many branches, all the holy institutions which, from the time of Jesus Christ, have covered the earth with their sheltering shade. Through the Church individuals and peoples are great and just and blessed. She cures all evils, she effectually secures every true good.

When our Saviour mounted up to heaven, He asked but a single thing for His disciples: *That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us.*<sup>4</sup> This is His last desire, His last word for us. He came upon earth only to create among men an image of the Divine Society. All the reward He asks for the works and sufferings He has endured for His Father's glory, is that this likeness shall be perfect and that it shall remain; that the association of souls, by its closeness, shall become like to that perfect unity which reigns among the Divine Persons. He asks not for His work any other warrant of strength or prosperity or duration. He asks no other glory for it; for of all miracles the divinest, of all power the most victorious, of all principles of life the most fruitful, is beyond all doubt the union of souls joined and, as it were, molten together in the fire of divine charity.

<sup>4</sup> St. John, xvii. 21.



## V.

The fearful power of the association of wicked men.

Satan understands the resistless power of association. He has brought to bear all the resources of his intelligence and all the energy of his will, in order to set up against the society of those souls who sacrifice their selfish interests to the triumph of God's cause, an equally compact society of souls working, at the expense of their own eternal interests, for the triumph of the cause of evil. The Church of the Saints is the masterpiece wrought by the Incarnate Word; but this infernal church of the wicked is the masterpiece of the fallen Archangel. Here, as everywhere else, he shows himself the imitator, or rather, as one of the Holy Fathers has expressed it, "the ape of God."

He too has given to his church an organization and a hierarchy in which all the degrees are perfectly bound together. In default of that charity which destroys all mean selfishness and blends interests in one, he unites hearts by a fire of hatred that suspends all rivalry until the day of victory. It is a pride that submits to the pride of others, a selfishness which, divided in everything else, here unites to make war on charity. There is no positive doctrine in it. The members of Satan agree only in denying. There is no agreement for building up, but the agreement

is perfect whenever there is question of pulling down. From the heretic who denies the power of the Church, to the pantheist and the atheist who deny God, and the sceptic who denies everything, there are numberless gradations. They form the different bodies of the great army of denial, that is to say, of the hosts of Satan, *the adversary* and the enemy of truth. Each of these denials is useful to him, and he makes use of them cleverly, in his own time and place. Even he turns to wonderful account, for drawing souls after him, the partial truths so many of his followers still hold. For nothing would be more harmful to him, even were it not impossible, than to have at his command nothing but absolute error. It is far also from being true that all his tools are perfectly initiated in the knowledge of the aim he has in view. On the contrary, he has but a small number of apostles to whom he has revealed his full secret. To others this secret is communicated only by degrees, according to the growing measure of their malice. Meanwhile the multitude suffers itself to be led on blindly, by the bonds of its own passions and prejudices.

The sacrilegious schemes of Satan's favorites, conceived as they are in the depths of hell and covered with an impenetrable veil of mystery, have for their aim naught but disorder and disorganization. How often have their machinations shaken to the base states the most solidly constituted, and over-

thrown kingdoms and kings, and buried in a common ruin empires, dynasties, institutions, and men. But it is the Church which, most of all, is aimed at, and against which *the gates of hell seek to prevail*. The attempts of wickedness we know shall be powerless; but they drag down to the abyss a great number of victims, and at this time we might almost say that Lucifer, so often cast down, was making his last effort to gain the victory over Christ.

But whence does this assembly of the wicked have its strength? Whence does it draw the evil influence which renders it, now more than ever before, the greatest danger of the entire world? Oh! let us not hide it from ourselves—its strength comes from association. Secret ties unite its members with each other. Every means of communication which human industry can invent, the press, commerce, industrial societies, beneficence itself, steam, electricity: all is a means to bring its members closer together, to make their league more compact and their understanding with each other more perfect and their action better concerted, and to render their influence more irresistible still.

Would to God that all Christians would give to the service of their holy cause the same activity, and, we must say it, the same abnegation which the ministers of Satan use in the performance of their work of destruction! We see them hasten unceasingly from one end of Europe to the other, confront-

ing every danger and crossing every barrier which is put in their path. How many boards of inspection are found, which the doctrines of the Church of Christ cannot pass, yet which idly try to stay the course of the most odious productions of the church of Satan? Who furnishes the means of printing so many evil books, and sells them at so cheap a price? Who pays the hire of so many agents? Who provides for the expenses of the socialistic unions of workingmen? Who counts out the money to their emissaries sent far and wide? What activity there is in all this, what zeal, what fearful abnegation of self!

This church has its sacraments also, and perhaps abominable sacrifices that it seeks to wrap round with impenetrable mystery, but over which from time to time Providence causes a ray of light to shine that discloses all its horror.

Who, in our day, has not heard of the secret societies, of their meetings and their "lodges"? No one can be ignorant that, under the veil of some philanthropic aim, among the really initiated the most frightful conspiracies have been organized against the Lord and His Anointed, against the Church and its Head, against the temporal power and the most sacred interests of society; and that the Satanic schemes of the chiefs of this sect are placed under the inviolable law of a sacrilegious oath.

Thus evil struggles against good, darkness against light, vice against virtue, death against life.

hell against heaven, Satan against God. It is a terrific struggle that began with the fall of the rebel Angel, and has never ceased to spring up anew, though with changing mien and varying fortune, through the whole course of the ages. The very nature of this sinister and darksome war, which the spirit of falsehood wages against the God of truth, hides the greater part of its manœuvring from our knowledge. But, could we write the history of the church of Satan as the history of the Church of Jesus Christ is written, we should see with what oneness of plan and unity of effort, with what flexible yet persistent tactics, this war has been carried on. We should have no trouble in recognizing the lineage of the sons of Cain and of Canaan, from the beginning of the ages to our own day. Such a history, by itself alone, would form a convincing proof of the fearful power which is in the possession of souls, the moment they unite together. For association must be indeed powerful, when it disputes the victory with God Himself, and for centuries delays the success of the efforts of the Incarnate Word and His Angels and His Saints! Thus association is still an element of strength, even when it can no longer be a source of perfection and happiness. Just as in heaven the association of all the Saints, in one and the same love, is the fountain-head of their divine bliss, so in hell the association of the evil Angels, in one and the same hatred, is the source of their deadly power.

The earth, from its place between heaven and hell, is the battle-field on which these two great associations have striven for dominion during sixty centuries.

There is an essential opposition between them in the spirit animating them, in the chiefs who govern them, in the motives urging them to action, in the works peculiar to them, in the end toward which they tend, and in the goal whereto they reach. Yet these two societies agree in one single point—in the proof they furnish us of the power of souls when they unite to obtain the same end.

One comes from heaven and leads men to heaven, along the way of virtue. The other has its beginning in hell, and leads the most part of its members along the broad way of sin.

How many marvels on one side, how many crimes on the other! Here the divinest virtues grow up and unfold themselves, enlightened by the sun of truth and made fruitful by charity. There, hideous vices like unclean reptiles propagate themselves in the dens of error. But to what are results so important for good or for evil to be attributed? We repeat, that it is to the power of association. Virtue, to be fruitful, must combine with virtue; and it is only because vice unites with vice that it spreads so frightfully.

[Readers from English-speaking countries may not readily understand Father Ramière's allusions to the compact organization of secret societies opposed to the Church. But in what

are called the Latin nations, both in Europe and America, notably in France, Italy, and Mexico, these societies have long openly played a great part in anti-Christian politics, especially in the complete secularization of the training of the young and in oppressive restrictions on the liberty of action of the clergy. Our own public, however, has a long experience of the efforts of anti-Catholic associations, such as the Bible and Foreign Mission Societies abroad, and the Evangelical Alliance and Children's Aid Societies at home, all having for one of their chief objects the perversion of the Church's children. The single difficulty of securing united aid for Catholic publications, when compared with the splendidly equipped publishing houses of non-Catholics and their provisions for the gratuitous distribution of their noxious literature, would show the power of association as well as the truth of our Lord's words—*the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*<sup>5]</sup>

<sup>5</sup>St. Luke, xvi. 8.

## VI.

Practical conclusion of what has been said on association.  
Relations between the Apostleship of Prayer and the  
Association for the Propagation of the Faith.

What conclusion should we draw from the considerations on which we have dwelt?

Association is the unfailing means set up by our Lord Himself, to secure to prayer an all-powerful efficiency. More than anything else it brings us near to God. Even in the natural order, it is a source of resistless strength and the groundwork of most wonderful achievements. In the supernatural order, it is the end of all the labors of the Man-God, the condition of success for His work, the sovereign object of His desires. In every age, most of all in our own, Satan and his followers make unheard-of efforts to put to the profit of their infernal hatred so unequalled a power. I ask, then, have we nothing to do on our side? Shall not we also make one supreme effort to draw closer the bond of divine charity, and thus withstand the machinations of the hosts of Satan? Shall not we seek to realize yet more completely that ideal which our Saviour set before us when He was leaving us—to unite us together in one communion of desire and prayer, even as God the Father and God the Son are united in the breathing forth of their Divine Spirit? Yes, it is along this



line we have to labor, if we would grow in strength and gain ground over our enemies! Nothing can be more according to the desires of the Heart of Jesus than an association of which such union shall be the special aim. It should form a vast reunion of all the souls most devoted to the cause of God. It should say to them over and over that they are not called to sanctify themselves alone, that it is in their power to give aid to the Church by effective work for the salvation of souls, that an Apostleship so useful to sinners is also the most efficient means they can use for their own sanctification. An association like this would excite them to pray more, would spread and keep up the spirit of zeal, and would awake among the children of the Church love and devotedness for their divine Mother, and thus unite souls more closely together. How then could it be other than a weight of salvation cast into the scales of the world's destiny, and a powerful help to the cause of God? It seems to us that to ask this question is to answer it.

We foresee, however, a difficulty that may present itself to the minds of some of our readers. They will tell us this league of prayers existed long before the creation of this new work. It is the *Association for the Propagation of the Faith*. What need of establishing a similar association, at the risk of hindering the development of a work so useful?

Certainly, we never thought that the Apostle-

ship of Prayer could have any such effect. Even, had we not been persuaded that by compassing a different end from the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, it could also favor the action and aid the development of this latter work, we should never have dreamed of its establishment.

But it is far from being the case that any incompatibility exists between these two works. On the contrary, we find in the marvellous success of the Association founded forty years ago at the foot of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Fourvière, one of the strongest motives for spreading that which had its birth, in the year 1844, near the no less famous shrine of Our Lady of Le Puy.\* The reader will allow us to explain briefly our reason for this; we shall then have finished setting before him our thought in all its fulness.

No Catholic is ignorant of the immense success of the work of the Propagation of the Faith. We need not speak of the sacred flame of charity and zeal which it has rekindled among the Christians of Europe, by making general its practices of almsgiving and prayer. To this work, that is to say, to the material means it furnishes to the great number of Catholic missions, numberless souls redeemed with

\* [The Association for the Propagation of the Faith is principally due to the inspired efforts of a young lady of Lyons (of which Fourvière is a suburb), in the year 1819; the same person—Mlle. Jaricot—afterward founded the *Living Rosary*, and interested herself in the work of Father Ramière.]

the Saviour's blood will owe their eternal salvation. Savage countries daily see new churches rising to the glory of the living God above the ruins of their pagodas. Thousands of children, baptized at the moment of their death, are put in possession of the heavenly inheritance. Men who had naught of the Christian but the name have the unhopèd-for blessing of the last Sacraments before they die. Idolaters renounce their errors and come daily to swell the flock of Jesus Christ. The Church, with the vast zeal that burns in her heart, unfolds on a larger scale and in wider measure her saving activity. Strong in the undying promises made to her and in the Divine Spirit that animates her, she realizes, more perhaps than at any previous time since the Apostles, the words of the Son of God: *Go, teach all nations*. To what are these advantages due? Is it not to the wonderful work of the Propagation of the Faith? The pronounced movement toward Catholicity, which is so strong in our day at nearly every point of the globe, has received its chief impulse from this association—after God. These are the miracles of the work; none can deny them.

Yet there is a contrast that cannot but strike every reflecting mind. How weak are the resources at the disposal of the work of the Propagation of the Faith, when compared with the immense and manifold needs of our missionaries! And yet, how wonderful are the results!

Without any doubt, we ought not to give the whole credit of these marvels to sums of money which are always very moderate when divided among so many needs, and which besides, of their own nature, are out of all proportion with the salvation of souls. The Protestant propaganda sows its gold by the handful, to gain proselytes; and until now it has not wrought a single lasting conversion.\* Whence comes this difference? It is important that we should understand it well.

On the one side, I see exhaustless treasures; but it is cold, lifeless metal scattered by icy hands. Assign as large a share as you will to the invincible error and the good intentions of certain of these non-Catholics who are in good faith. Their individual dispositions change nothing in the character of their work. Now, this character is heresy, that is, it is opposed to unity, and consequently to true charity. The heart that *gives* is not moved by the divine impulse. The heart that *distributes* too often obeys a selfish motive of some low interest or unworthy speculation. Ought we to be astonished that the heart that *receives* should remain untouched by the truth?

This has not been the case with Catholic mission-work. Its treasure has been scanty, yet how

\* [This is not mere assertion. During the past year, the English Protestant Canon Taylor has strongly pointed out the "failure" of Protestant missionary efforts.]

much more precious! Sometimes it has been made up of the generous gifts of the rich. In the light of faith the rich man has held himself happy to exchange his gold for souls redeemed with the blood of a God and destined for eternal happiness. Oftener still it is made up of the alms of the poor, of the fruit of their savings and the sweat of their brow, of the widow's mite. But this almsgiving, however limited it may be, is the alms of charity; and it is distributed by the hands of charity. Moved by zeal and made fruitful by prayer, enlivened by love and having for beginning and end naught but the glory of God and the happiness of men, what could it do else than touch and convert hearts? How could the daughter of charity bring forth aught but charity, especially in the hands of the ministers of the God of charity, whose sweat—and sometimes their blood—falls upon the alms they receive? Doubt it not, this is the secret of the wonders we admire. This is the vital principle which gives to the work of the Propagation of the Faith its strength, its power, and its prosperity.

We have dwelt on this point because it is of importance to our end. We cannot make our plan understood, nor justify our design otherwise than by first establishing a truth that gives us its key and must be its unchanging foundation.

Indeed, it is to the prayer, to the holy desires, to the burning zeal of the members of the Propagation of the Faith, united with the toils, the suffer-

ings, and sometimes with the blood of the missionaries, that we must attribute the plentiful harvest with which God crowns the undertakings of these worthy laborers, and the rapid progress made in many places by the Catholic religion. For it is not so much the money, as the charity and the prayers of the Associates, that paves the way to these wonders. From this a further thought naturally springs up in our mind. What would not be the advantages offered by an association that, while it would give strong help to so useful a work and urge on the faithful to increase its resources, should give a yet larger part to prayer and make of this its chief and almost its only aim? Such an association would address itself in a special manner to the members of religious communities, who are so much the more capable of aiding the Church by the almsgiving of their prayers, as their vow makes it impossible for them to give material aid. Such an association would be founded on this principle, which is beyond dispute, that supernatural means have the more immediate and necessary relation with a supernatural end such as the conversion and salvation of souls. It would thus apply itself in an especial manner to these means; it would develop and keep ever awake in its associates both zeal and charity; and it would lead them to solicit continually the graces of salvation for the souls of poor unbelievers. Let us imagine to ourselves such a league, made up of the pious faithful

and comprising a great number of those religious houses which are the ornament and consolation of the Church. Let us suppose that these souls, so dear to God and burning with the desire of procuring His glory, endeavor to supply by their prayers what their condition of life or their vocation does not permit them to do by the word and toil of the priestly apostleship. And let us see, too, the holiest part of the Church and its most eminent members, pastors and faithful alike, mingling their efforts to give God new children. What would not be the result of prayers thus united, what would not be the strength of the entreaties which together would thus lay siege to the Heart of God! Everything in such an association would secure it the very greatest efficiency—the principle of zeal that would animate it, the nature of the elements of which it would be composed, and the extent as well as the permanence of its action.

This is the thought which has given birth to our work. To make it better understood, we must glance at the different causes which must co-operate in the spread of the Gospel, either as means or as conditions.

*Faith cometh by hearing*—by preaching—the Apostle says. First of all, then, the Church has to send to unbelieving nations apostles who shall announce to them the good tidings of salvation. Thanks be to God, this condition has never ceased

to be faithfully fulfilled. Apostles have never been wanting in the Church; and in our day they come to her aid in greater number and fervor than ever before. A great number of religious congregations vie with each other in zeal, helping the Church, to the very extremities of the world, in bearing that witness to Jesus Christ which she is bound to give. At the head of all, the Congregation of the Propaganda is like a mainspring that gives activity and regularity to the unceasing movement of the Apostleship.

But when the mission has been offered and taken up, all is not yet at an end. How shall the missionary, in his far-off country, support his material existence? How shall he provide for the cost of worship among a people wretched and destitute of every resource? How, even, shall he cover the expense of his long and costly journey? We can understand that the aid of money is necessary to him; it is the indispensable condition of his existence and of his action. The work of the Propagation of the Faith has especially taken upon itself to provide for this imperative need; and we know with what success it is doing this.

The apostle has been sent out. He reaches his destination; he preaches, the good tidings are heard. Is this all? Surely not. To be saved, it is not enough to hear. It is necessary to believe, to love, to act, and in case of need to suffer. But who



shall give to the poor unbeliever, to the slave of Satan, such heavenly sentiments and a strength so superhuman? Grace alone has this power; it alone is the true cause of salvation. Preaching and almsgiving are only the instruments and the conditions of this divine work. Most of all, then, by winning grace from God, can the Christian give efficient help to the salvation of unbelievers. Now the easiest means, the means beyond fail, for obtaining grace, is prayer, and especially the prayer of a great number of hearts united in the Heart of Jesus. It is clear, then, that an association of this kind cannot be other than a powerful aid to the apostolic congregations and to the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. While these make ready for the use of grace those instruments and means through which it is wont to pour itself out, this will obtain for these instruments that very grace without which they can do nothing.

We have said enough to make plain both the difference between the Apostleship of Prayer and the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, and the bond of union between these two works. The former, far from encroaching on the ground of the latter, gives it important aid and happily completes it. Its most useful Associates it enlists in religious communities which can give but feeble aid to the work of the Propagation of the Faith; while among Christians living in the world it inculcates more deeply and recalls more constantly the great duty of zeal.

These associations are therefore distinct, but they are closely bound together.

If anyone should still doubt of the utility of the Apostleship of Prayer to the work of the Propagation of the Faith, it will be sufficient to ask a single question. What would be necessary in order that this Association, already so fruitful, should see its resources multiplied an hundredfold in a few years, so that for 5,000,000 which it now gathers together every year, it would receive 500,000,000? Would it be necessary that the riches of Europe should increase in the same ratio? No, there would simply be need that the spirit of faith and zeal should gain over the hearts of Christians a hold one hundred times stronger, and thus make it a hundred times easier for them to levy on their pleasures, and their slavish following of the fashions, and the luxurious furnishing of their houses, this glorious tribute of charity. Now our association has for its end to fan unceasingly this heavenly flame of faith and zeal, and to reach this end it takes the means most efficacious—prayer.

## CHAPTER III.

### THIRD SOURCE OF POWER: UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART.

ANALYSIS. I. *The prayers of Christians are the prayers of Jesus Christ.* Source of prayer in the Heart of Jesus—Christians and Christ form one mystical body—doctrine of *incorporation* of Christians with Jesus Christ. Nature of the life of this body—life proceeds from the Head—parable of the Vine and branches. Communication of the divinity to men by the Incarnation—*Abide in Me.*

II. *The Christian's prayers are produced in him by the Holy Ghost.* The Soul of Christ's mystical body—example of the human body—the spirit making alive. Teaching of St. Paul—prayer divine.

III. *Holy Communion, a means of union of life and prayers with Jesus Christ.* Need of renewal of life—example of corporeal food—the Gift of our Lord. Teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria. The Eucharist, a new source of strength to prayer—the true heart of the Church—chief object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Our Lord's prayer in the Blessed Sacrament—His call to all Christians.

IV. *Conclusion of the whole first part.*

## THE APOSTLESHIP'S POWER FROM THE HEART OF THE INCARNATE WORD AND THE HOLY GHOST.

We have still a step to mount upward to the height of the divine mercies. We must find the chief source of the power of our prayers, which is also our most authentic and unquestionable title to greatness, the most solid support of our hope, the most precious of all those gifts by which, according to St. Peter, *we are made partakers of the divine nature.*<sup>1</sup>

It was an easy task for us to see how prayer is the fittest disposition which God could ask from our weakness for winning His grace; and how association increases beyond all limit the power of this means of salvation. But prayer, even when it issues forth from the purest heart and is offered with the liveliest faith and the deepest humility and with perseverance the most unflinching, and even though it bears up to heaven the desires of many united as one, as incense of many kinds sends up delicious fragrance in a single flame—prayer of this kind, even under conditions the most favorable for its success, must

<sup>1</sup> II. St. Peter, i. 4.

always, so it should seem, remain a human work, and consequently out of all proportion with the divine grace it is to win.

Yet this is not at all the case. Prayer is a divine work, quite as much as the grace for which it asks. It is divine in the Fountain-head whence it issues forth—in the Heart of the Incarnate Word. It is divine from the Principle that produces it in our hearts—the Holy Ghost. And just because God the Father recognizes in our prayer the pleading of His beloved Son and of His Spirit, He cannot refuse to give ear to it; He is, as it were, forced to allow His most precious gifts to be torn from Him by its holy violence.

These are not mere figures of speech; they are articles of our faith, as unquestionable as they are consoling. It is now our task to give account of them.

## I.

The prayers of Christians are the prayers of Jesus Christ.

Our prayers, we have said, take their beginning in the Heart of Jesus; so that they are the prayers of Jesus Christ as really as, or rather more really than they are our prayers. How is this? Because, in the order of salvation, all Christians form with Jesus Christ but a single body, of which He is the Head and they are the members. From this it follows that no supernatural action can be conceived otherwise than from the inspiration of Jesus Christ, nor be begun, or followed out, or fulfilled but by His help.

Would that it might be given us to make all Christians grasp all that is real and divine in this doctrine of their incorporation with Jesus Christ!

Undoubtedly our baptism, by which this miracle has been wrought, has not deprived us of our individuality nor of our personal liberty. In the same way, when by nutrition we assimilate to ourselves different articles of food, their molecules still remain distinct from those which before went to make up our body. That which henceforth makes of the nourishment we have taken but a single thing with ourselves, is that it begins to live of our life and to move under the control of our will. In a word, it becomes an integral part of one whole, which has its own existence, its own life, its own movement and

work and destiny. Thus it is with Christians whom baptism has incorporated with Jesus Christ. They keep their individual existence. They even have an advantage over the merely material parts of our body ; they still are and ever remain persons. But while keeping their true personality in regard to other Christians with whom they are thus united, they none the less form with them and with Jesus Christ, Who is their common Head, a single body, which has a divine life and divine faculties and a divine destiny.

Everyone knows that it is in the head, or rather in the brain-matter of which the head is the chief storehouse, that we find the seat of the sensitive life and activity of the body. There all the impressions which affect our organs meet together. Thence the signal is given for the least movements communicated to the remotest members ; and each member loses all its power of feeling and moving, the moment communication is interrupted between itself and the head. Now this dependence, this union, the closeness of which scientific observation is daily proving more clearly, is a touching image of our relations with Jesus our Divine Head. Long before science had unveiled the mysteries of our organism, St. Paul made use of this comparison, to make us understand that, in the order of salvation, we could have no feeling, no movement, no life save in Jesus Christ ; and that all our works and all our prayers, the

moment they become supernatural, are really the works and the prayers of Jesus Christ. Our Divine Saviour Himself had taught us this truth before, under the no less striking image of the union existing between the vine and its branches. In His discourse to His disciples before the Last Supper, He said : *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you the branches : he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit : for without Me you can do nothing. . . . If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.*<sup>2</sup>

Do we now understand the reason of the unfailing power of our prayers? How could they be otherwise than efficacious and all-powerful, since they are prayers truly divine? It is like the words pronounced by the mouth of a man, and the looks sent forth from his eyes; they are the words and looks of intelligence. It is not that there is any intelligence in mouth and eyes, but because the words and looks are produced in these bodily organs by an intelligent soul. In the same way, the sighs of the Christian heart, the entreaties spoken by his lips, are things truly divine, because of the Divine Fountain-head from which they come.

If we would have an exact idea of our dignity

<sup>2</sup> St. John, xv.



as Christians, we must consider it as a sharing in the Incarnation of the Son of God. It was not to one single body and one single soul that the Son of God designed to unite Himself, when He became incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was to all humanity, and to each one of its members. The Incarnation had for its end to make us divine. The Holy Fathers do not hesitate to make use of this expression, and they are the warrant for its exactness.

Most certainly, there was to be but one single body and one single soul so closely united to the Person of the Son of God as to be deprived of their own personality, that they might be clothed with His; this was the Body and Soul which make up the Sacred Humanity of our Saviour. But if Jesus Christ alone substantially possesses the fulness of Divinity, all those who are united with Him in holy baptism shall share in this fulness, each according to his measure. *For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, corporally.—And of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace.*<sup>3</sup> His character as Head precisely consists in this exclusive power which He has, of communicating to others the supernatural life which dwells in its entirety in Him. He lives in all Christians, as the head lives in all the members. In them He follows out the great undertaking which He only began during His mortal existence. Through

<sup>3</sup> Colossians, ii. 9; St. John, i. 16.

them He teaches the same doctrine; in them He does works, like in all things to those He wrought in other days, and He has even promised to work greater things in them.<sup>4</sup> In them He undergoes the same trials, He fulfils the same destiny, He offers to His Father the same prayers. Once again, how can we wonder that such prayers should be heard without fail? Can God the Father have ceased to love His Son, and to find His chief bliss in the communication He makes to Him of all His good things and in the glory He receives back from Him in turn for that with which He crowns Him? Can He be sparing of His gifts toward the members of the body of His Son? Or will He not rather glorify Him and thus glorify Himself, by the pouring out of His graces and by the fruitfulness with which he is well-pleased to endow the branches of His Vine? *In this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit.*<sup>5</sup> And our Saviour said, at the moment of working a striking miracle: *Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest Me always.*<sup>6</sup> Who can persuade himself that Christ has lost this filial and divine assurance when, to spread the glory of His Father, it pleases Him to make of man the instrument of His works and the mouthpiece of His prayers? Let us not have

<sup>4</sup> *He that believeth in Me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do.* St. John, xiv. 12.

<sup>5</sup> St. John, xv.

<sup>6</sup> *id.*, xi. 41-2.

thoughts like this, but rather strive to fulfil the conditions which our charitable Saviour points out to us for obtaining all things from His Father. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you : you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.* We are not to be content with simply doing nothing that can drive Him from our hearts. Let us never act, never send up a prayer, without uniting ourselves with Him, without taking instruction from Him and securing His co-operation with us. Then we may ask for whatever we will with the greatest confidence, —especially for that which our Divine Saviour desires above all things—the conversion of sinners, the salvation of the world, and the triumph of the Church ; and it shall be granted to us.

## II.

The Christian's prayers are produced in him by the Holy Ghost.

We have not yet said all that concerns this consoling mystery of our incorporation with Jesus Christ. As yet we know but very imperfectly the bond which unites us to Him and makes us members of His mystical body—in virtue of which our actions are His actions and our prayers His prayers.

That which constitutes the unity of the human body is the soul. The material elements, of which each of our members is made up, but a short time since belonged to outside bodies. They become integral parts of our own body only when our soul seizes hold on them and makes of them its own organs, animates them, and communicates to them, through the medium of the nerves, that sensitiveness and activity of which the brain is undoubtedly the storehouse and the instrument, but of which the soul alone is the principle. It is therefore the soul which unites the members with the head. It is the soul which keeps up between them a constant communication. The soul, being present in every part of the body, though it has its chief residence in the head, sees through the eyes, hears by the ears, acts with the hands, walks with the feet, and feels with the whole body. We do not deny that it may have some vital fluid, as its immediate instrument. Some such

existence science may think it has discovered ; and its function would be to transmit sensation and movement from the extremities to the centre, from the members to the head, and from the head to the members.\* But this fluid itself—the vital spirit, as the ancients called it—could receive from the soul alone the power of accomplishing its work. The true vital spirit of the human body, once again, is the reasonable soul.

Of necessity, there must be something similar in the mystical body of Jesus Christ. If there were not a close and living bond uniting us to Him—a bond maintaining between us and Him constant communication, wide enough to embrace all souls that live in the supernatural life, in heaven and on earth and in purgatory, and therefore close enough to unite each of these souls immediately with its Head—if there were not a vital spirit quick enough in its transmission and powerful enough in its action to reproduce on the instant the thoughts and feelings and will of the Saviour in His members, however far away, it would be only by a very inexact figure of speech that the Church could be called His mystical body.

\* [At the present—scarcely thirty years since the above was written—few scientific men would defend the “vital fluid,” so uncertain are the dogmas of human reason. The materialists now in vogue often count vitality as a quality of matter under certain conditions; but they are confessedly unable to explain the persistent oneness of its action except by the soul.]

And such a bond really exists. There is a life-giving spirit that dwells in the Person of Jesus Christ as having in Him its chief seat, and passes on to us, with unbroken movement, all the feelings of Jesus Christ, just as it makes Jesus Christ Himself feel whatever touches us. It makes us see in His light, act with His strength, in a word, live with His life. How then can we doubt that we are His members, in as true a meaning as that our head and our feet are the members of our own body? How, consequently, can we doubt that our works and our prayers are divine?

There is nothing in Scripture laid down more clearly and forcibly than this real presence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in every Christian who is in a state of grace. If we desired to bring out this teaching in its full light, it would be necessary to copy whole pages from the Old and the New Testament alike. Most of all, it would be necessary to bring forward in their entirety the Epistles of St. Paul; for on this dogma is based the whole sublime theology of the great Apostle. We may recall a single point of his teaching that will allow of our following up this chain of reasoning.<sup>6</sup>

Who are the two men of whose existence in every Christian St. Paul speaks? *Put off the old*

<sup>6</sup> [St. Paul's Epistles are here cited as follows]: Ephesians, iv.; Romans, viii.; Galatians, iv., v.; II. Corinthians, iii.; Philemon, ii.

*man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth.* The old man is the man of nature; it is the soul inasmuch as it is endowed only with the life of reason, too often, alas! overpowered by the lusts of the flesh. What is the new man? It is the man of grace, that is to say, the soul inasmuch as it is made alive by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Which gives it a divine life, just as the soul uniting itself with the body gives the latter a rational life. The Spirit of Jesus Christ is therefore present, according to St. Paul, in the soul of every Christian. Thanks to this Spirit, we are no longer of the reprobate crowd, *who walk according to the flesh.* Of course, so long as we are on this earth, the Spirit will not so rule in us as to free us from all inward rebellion. Like Rebecca, we carry in our bosom two men who fight against each other. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* But it depends on ourselves whether the victory shall be given to the Spirit, and whether we shall suffer ourselves to be led by Its light and be moved by Its unction. Then indeed we shall be truly the sons of God, since we shall live the life of His only Son. *For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God.* We shall be free, because we shall have within us the Supreme Spirit that carries liberty wherever It enters. *Now the*

*Lord is a Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* We shall be assured of immortality, because we shall have within us the Spirit of life that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. *If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you: He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you.* Then, in a single word, we shall become other Jesus Christs. Consequently, our prayers will no longer be our prayers, but the prayers of Jesus Christ. This is indeed necessary, for how can we of ourselves give forth speech proportionate with that heavenly dignity with which we are clothed? How shall we learn the language of that divine society into which we have been admitted, unless this tongue so strange to our nature be taught to us? *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* But the Spirit of God, Which is present in us, not as fully, but as really as in the Soul of Jesus Christ, reproduces in the depths of our soul the feelings of our Saviour.\* It makes our

\* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—We speak here only of that union of the Holy Ghost with the human soul of Jesus Christ, which constitutes or accompanies the sanctifying grace of which that Sacred Soul has received the fulness. Since the sanctifying grace of the Man-God is, according to theologians, of the same kind as our own, it follows that the union produced by this grace between the Soul of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost is also of the same kind as the union of this Divine Spirit with the souls of the just. The difference between the one union and the



heart experience a counter-pulsation of His Divine Heart, as regularly as the least arteries of the human body give answer to the beatings of the heart. It makes us send up to heaven *unspeakable groanings*, like to those which issue forth from the breast of the Son of God. It teaches us to call God our Father, or rather It thus calls Him by our mouth and cries unto Him—*Abba, Father*—with that tone of filial love which the Heart of the Heavenly Father knows not to resist.

Prayers like this cannot but be heard. It would be the most amazing of all miracles, the most contradictory of all impossibilities, that God the Father should repel the prayers which His Divine Son forms in us by His Spirit. Indeed, it is God the Father Who is their first Author. For the Spirit of God, Which St. Paul calls the Spirit of the Son, because It proceeds really from the Son and because It has been given in all Its fulness to the Sacred Humanity of our Saviour, does not belong to Him in such a way that It is not equally from the Father. On the contrary, It is the fruit—the common term—of the love of the Father and the Son, Who unite in producing It by the most ineffable of all unions. Every desire therefore which this Divine Spirit inspires in the Heart of Jesus Christ and afterward communicates to the heart of Christians, mounts up to God the Father other consists in the fact that the second is only a participation of the first. (See Suarez, *de Incarn.*, disp. xviii.)

as to its source. How then can God the Father refuse to make use of His almighty power in carrying out those desires of which He is Himself the beginning? How can He Who enters into hearts mistake in the sighings of the Christian the echo of His own voice, the speech of His own Spirit, the expression of His own love? *He that searcheth the heart, knoweth what the Spirit desireth.* We do not hesitate to repeat that, in face of this doctrine, the all-powerful efficacy of the prayers of the Christian can no longer be for us a mystery and a subject of wonder. We have the right to be astonished at one single thing only. It is that so unlimited a power, unceasingly placed by the Holy Ghost at the disposal of every Christian in the state of grace, does not day by day work greater miracles, and that it has not yet changed the face of the world.

## III.

Holy Communion, a means of renewing the life of Jesus Christ in us, and of uniting our prayers more closely with His own.

In holy baptism, the Spirit of God planted within us the seed of the life of Jesus Christ. All the efforts of His grace tend to develop it. But unhappily, it is not so rooted in our soul that it cannot be torn up by sin, or stifled by the lusts of the flesh, or withered and dried up in the unwholesome air of the world. What means shall our Divine Head take to prevent His members from losing, little by little, this life which is the fruit of His death? It shall be a means worthy of Him, bearing the seal of infinite wisdom and power and love. Not only must the divine life in us be kept from all corruption, but day by day it must take on a new growth. Day by day our union with Jesus Christ must become closer. Day by day His Spirit must be communicated to us more plentifully; and day by day our desires and our prayers shall be more closely blended with the desires and prayers of His Sacred Heart. The means for all this is the Holy Eucharist.

Life of every kind must have food suited to its nature, and only the frequent use of such food can make up for its daily losses. Therefore our divine life must have its own divine food. As we are made up of spirit and body together, it is right that this

food should not be purely spiritual, but that grace should be contained therein under a sensible covering. There is nothing better fitted for this than the Body of the Saviour, that Divine Body all penetrated with the Holy Ghost and made present to us under the appearance of bread. This is the ineffable food that ever more and more makes us to *be filled unto all the fulness of God*. It is not a dead and purely material body that we receive. Such food would be as nothing to us. It is the living, spiritual, and life-giving Body of *the last Adam made into a quickening spirit*—the Flesh of the Word of Life Who was in the Father at the beginning, possessing in Himself the life of all that should one day exist. This Divine Flesh, by uniting Itself with our flesh, makes us live of the life of Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ Himself lives of the life of His Father. *As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus too we come into perfect union with our brethren. St. Cyril unfolds to us this wondrous mystery, and no Doctor of the Church seems to have grasped more completely its meaning :

“ Jesus Christ desires to unite us perfectly with God and among ourselves, melting us all, as it were, together, however far removed we may be from each other in body and spirit. To do this He brings all believers unto Himself by the eating of the same

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians, iii. 19 ; St. John, i., vi. ; I. Corinthians, xv. 45.

Body—no other than His own Sacred Body. By this Holy Communion He makes them all *concorporeal* among themselves and with Him. *We, being many, are one Bread, one Body, all that partake of one Bread.* Jesus Christ cannot be divided; and for this reason the Church is called the body of Jesus Christ, and we His members. This union St. Paul calls *the great mystery of godliness, which in other generations was not known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to His holy Apostles and Prophets in the Spirit, namely, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body and copartners of His promise in Christ Jesus.*<sup>8</sup>

O union beyond all understanding! O abyss of love, into which the heart plunges with so much the more delight as the mind is unable to sound its depths!

Everyone can see the new strength which the Christian's prayers must draw from this mystery. Will he not dare to ask all things, when he bears within his breast the Heart of Jesus? Then, truly, his prayers shall be blended into one with those of his Divine Saviour. Then, too, he shall have within himself the Holy Spirit, no longer in limited measure, but in all Its fulness. Then can he offer to God the Father the wishes of His well-beloved Son, while he sends up before Him his own desires,

<sup>8</sup> St. Cyrill. Alex. XI. in Joan. xi.; I. Corinthians, x. 17, Ephesians, iii. 5, 6, iv. 23, 30, I. Timothy, iii 16.

all burning with the boundless charity he holds within himself, not now in imparted rays, but in its own fiery centre.

In this mystery of love Jesus Christ is the Heart of the Church, rather than its Head. For this reason, it is especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist that the devotion to the Sacred Heart loves to contemplate Him. If we would look upon the Saviour as Head of His Church, we must turn to heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of His Father, whence He moves all things and governs the society of Angels and of men. The head has its place above the body, in order to move and govern all the members. But the heart is placed in the midst of the body. There, by a hidden and mysterious action, it presides over the nourishing of all the organs, it unceasingly renews the blood, and spreads through every part its heat and life. This is the very manner of being of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; these are the tasks which He fulfils therein. And the principal act of that interior life, which He thus keeps up in His mystical body, is prayer. It is chiefly to renew in each Christian the spirit of prayer that He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. It is to preserve this spirit with unchanged strength in the bosom of His Church, that He dwells ever present in the tabernacle.

How eloquent is the lesson given us by our Divine Saviour from that silent pulpit, where He

sums up all the teachings of His life. Let us, in a moment of recollection, listen to Him and seek to understand that lasting mystery of love and prayer.

What is Jesus Christ doing in the Eucharist? Seemingly nothing, in reality everything. He loves, He prays, He offers Himself up ; this is His life in the Blessed Sacrament. He is the only source, the universal cause of all the good wrought in the Church, His mystical body. How does He continue His work of the redemption of men? By prayer and love—*always living to make intercession for us.*<sup>8</sup> He prays by day ; and while the whole world around Him is astir in its commotion—while ungrateful man, forgetful of heaven his true country, ignores and denies his Saviour, and heedless of the care of his soul, sacrifices his eternity to the interests of time that perish and to his own trivial cares—the pleading voice of the Divine Mediator is lifted up in man's behalf from the depths of the tabernacle. He prays by night ; and while His reasonable creatures are sunk in sleep—while they no longer, it would seem, have understanding to know or will to love their Creator—Jesus Christ lives, knows, adores, loves, and ceases not to pray—*always living to make intercession for us.* Generations pass away in turn from the stage of the world, years follow after years and centuries succeed to centuries. Jesus Christ remains ever living, ever praying, and by His prayers ever sanctifying

<sup>8</sup> Hebrews, vii. 25.

the generations, and bringing forth new adorers to His Father. Thus it is that the ancient figure of perpetual sacrifice becomes real; thus He is in the midst of us as our prayer, substantial and ever living.

Let us shut ourselves with Him in this blessed prison, where for eighteen hundred years love has held Him enchained, if we wish truly to understand the meaning of these words—*Apostleship of Prayer*. There this Apostleship is practised without interruption, there it puts forth all its energy. Thence it makes fruitful the toils of apostolic laborers, it fans unceasingly the flame of their zeal and touches the hearts of those who listen to them, it consoles the just and calls entreatingly to sinners, it brings down grace from heaven and turns aside the thunderbolts of God's justice. In one word, it is there saving souls and spreading abroad life upon the earth.

When the Apostleship of Prayer is thus considered, it shows itself to be the strongest, the most fruitful, the most needed, and the sweetest of all apostleships. It is also the readiest to our hand and the easiest to practise. Is there a Christian who is not called to have his share in it? It is impossible to profess a sincere faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist—impossible to believe that His unbroken occupation is to pray for us, for our brethren, for His Church—without being led to unite our prayers with His, and feeling ourselves obliged so to do. Still less can we receive Him into



our bosom and feel there His Heart beating with a boundless desire for the salvation of souls, without our own heart beating in unison with His.

Yet there are souls called to take on themselves a very special share in this Apostleship, and to give to the Heart of Jesus a co-operation of greater efficiency. It is those who are taught by the Spirit of God the secrets of the interior life. Whether they live in the shade of the cloister or have found means to make for themselves a solitude amid the world, they keep up with the Heart of their God a closer communication and a more familiar intercourse.

They are more easily inspired with His sentiments and they work more actively for His interests. In the body of the Church these souls are like those necessary, though unseen, organs that immediately surround the heart of man and, together with it, help to give movement and life to arms and feet and every member. Thus they obtain for the ministers of the Church and for all her members the graces necessary for fulfilling their duties. Their action is hidden, yet how useful it is; they are truly the *vital organs of prayer*. To their prayer must be attributed the greater part of the merit of the life of the Church and of the works accomplished by her apostles and her pastors. And for their prayer is reserved beforehand the special affection of the Heart of God.

In these chosen souls the Apostleship of Prayer is to be carried to a higher degree of perfection.

But for all that, it is by no means their exclusive work, nor does it belong to any special class of persons.

There is no Christian who is not united with the Heart of Jesus by the sacred character of his baptism and the bond of faith. There is not one who ought not and who cannot be united with Him by the far closer tie of charity and the real sharing in His Spirit. There is not one who is not called frequently to renew this spiritual union by a participation, equally real, in the Flesh of our Divine Saviour. Finally, there is not one for whom the Heart of Jesus does not pray without ceasing in the holy tabernacle, and whose prayers He is not ready to offer up to God His Father. Therefore, there is not one who cannot and who ought not to make use of this limitless treasure, and to pray by Jesus Christ, pray with Jesus Christ, pray in Jesus Christ, and last of all, pray for all the intentions for which Jesus Christ is praying. For, in a well-organized body, the members can have no other tendencies than those of the head.

## IV.

## Conclusion of the whole first part.

In all we have hitherto said we have had but one aim—to disclose the sources from which the Apostleship of Prayer draws its strength, and to set forth in their full light the elements of which it is made up. But we could not do this without drawing a conclusion from the different considerations we have had occasion to develop. It is this. Our Apostleship, when seriously put in practice and extending its influence, not over a few particular actions, but over the whole of life, is nothing else than Christian charity practised in all its perfection and delivered from all those hindrances which, in the narrowness of our hearts, we put in the way of its universal character.

Two things are alike certain : we are obliged to love all men, and for the vast majority of men we have no means of exercising the love we owe them, except prayer. Accordingly, even if we had other means of showing our love for them, we should not be released from the obligation of using this, which is the easiest and most necessary of all. What is it to love, if not *to wish well* to those whom we love? What is it to pray for the salvation of our neighbors, if not to express to God our desires as the well-wishers of their true good? If this is so, we cannot help seeing

that the love of all men, and prayer offered to God for the salvation of all men, make up but one and the same duty. For a love that is real enough to make us seriously desire the salvation of our neighbor, cannot help asking it, in his behalf, from the only Author of our salvation. The Apostleship of Prayer is therefore, at all times, the indispensable fulfilment of the great command of charity; oftenest even it is the only fulfilment possible of this precept of *the love of our neighbor* which, according to St. Paul, *is the fulfilling of the law*. Such an Apostleship then must enter into the designs of God as certainly as does the duty of loving all men. We cannot remain quite heedless of this Apostleship without putting ourselves in open opposition with God, and we are sure of being by so much the more pleasing to Him as our prayer is more apostolic. It is not a counsel, or work of simple supererogation, nor yet a side-duty. It is the essential condition of life for each Christian, as it is for the life of the entire Church. Consequently, it is a strict duty, but at the same time the easiest and sweetest of duties. It is the love of that which is good in its full extent, it is prayer truly Catholic, it is the fulfilment of the precept of the Apostle, who bids us to reproduce in ourselves *that mind which was also in Christ Jesus*. Moreover, it is the carrying out of the words of our Divine Master: *As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, the same also*

*shall live by Me.*<sup>9</sup> The Apostleship of Prayer is thus the simple acquittal of that debt which we contract each time we receive into ourselves a new share of the life of Jesus Christ. It is the perfect union of our heart with His Heart, the complete welding together of our interests with His interests, of our desires with His desires, of our life with His life.

This work then is not calculated to bring any novelty into the Church. God forbid ! The Apostleship of Prayer is as old as the Church herself. It was solemnly established when our Saviour said to His Apostles : *A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.*<sup>10</sup> For our Divine Saviour has loved us by praying for the salvation of all men, and by offering Himself up for them in sacrifice. Therefore, we cannot love them as He has loved them, otherwise than by praying and by sacrificing ourselves for them, that is to say, by putting in practice the Apostleship of Prayer, and the apostleship of sacrifice which is its natural fruit.

This Apostleship is not only as ancient as the Church, it is also as familiarly known to every true child of the Church. Each of us has practised it from his earliest years. The day when our mother taught us to join our little hands together and lisp the Saviour's prayer—*Our Father Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will*

<sup>9</sup> Romans, xiii. 10 ; Philippians, ii. 5 ; St. John, vi. 58.

<sup>10</sup> St. John, xiii. 34.

*be done on earth as it is in heaven*, and the rest—that day we began fulfilling the apostolic vocation which we had received in our baptism. And whenever, since that day, we have said this prayer, we have done an apostolic deed.

What then still remains for us to do? Is there need of a new association to unfold before Christians a power they cannot overlook unless they forget they are Christians—to stir them up to perform a duty they are fulfilling every day?

Oh, doubtless we should have nothing more to do, were not man endowed with that strange faculty of knowing as if he knew not, and of making barren, through his lack of attention, the most fruitful truths and those easiest to understand. We have seen how the Apostleship of Prayer is very clearly comprised in the doctrine of our incorporation with Jesus Christ, which is the foundation of the whole Christian teaching. It is in the precept of charity, which is the basis of all the morality of the Gospel; and it is in the Lord's Prayer, which sums up all our worship. There would indeed be nothing to do, were not this Apostleship, for the great number of Christians, what the redemption so clearly foretold by the prophets was for the Jews—a hidden mystery. This is unhappily the case; and the truths we have just explained, evidently drawn as they are from the principles of our faith, are at least forgotten by a great number. Moreover, the great number of just

souls neglect to make use, as they ought, of that limitless power which is in their possession for restoring life to the dead. Ah—let us acknowledge it—there still remains much for us to do. We have to bring out in striking relief this doctrine which, till now, has been left too much in the background. We have to make clear and shining before all eyes that which many have seen but dimly. We have to recall to all Christians one of the grandest titles of their high dignity, of which the greater number seem not even to suspect the existence. We must bring them to fulfil, with far more merit and greater fruit, a duty which they now accomplish for the most part mechanically and without taking it in all its wonderful reach.

Of course, Christians pray that all men may know and hallow the name of God. They ask for the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will here on earth as in heaven. But how few, as they utter these sublime words, understand all the meaning of them! How much more powerful would prayers like these become in their mouth, if the truths we have recalled to them were more present to their mind! How much more effectively would they help on the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, if they made part of an association ever recalling to them that, by each one of their actions, by every sigh of their heart, they have the power of hastening the time of His blessed coming. Such an associ-

ation would furnish them easy means of giving to their most indifferent actions this apostolic virtue, and it would often keep before their mind motives able to stir up their zeal, along with the great need of the souls they are called to succor. Such is the end set before the Association of the Apostleship of Prayer.

It is not an *innovation* which it brings into the Church ; it is a *renewal* which it is to stir up. Innovations are repugnant to the nature of the Church, which is a society divinely constituted and therefore essentially conservative. Renewal, on the other hand, is the constant end of all her efforts, because it is the great need of our nature, ever prone to glide down to lower levels. Like the Holy Ghost, Whose organ she is, the Church tries day by day to bring out in more vivid light the teachings she has received from the Divine Master ; for they are yet far from having received their full development. At the fitting time she *brings all things to our mind*, and teaches us to find in this heavenly food, which is as ancient as herself, a savor ever new and the satisfaction of our ever-recurring needs.

The great need of our age—we shall soon have occasion to prove it—is unity. The movement started from Babel seems to have reached a final term, and to be about to give way to a contrary movement. The peoples have separated themselves from each other and have filled the earth ; and they



seem now to be under an influence, as it were, of the ebb of tide. All their tendencies are bringing them together, while science is furnishing them with means of communication hitherto unknown. Is not this the most fitting season for recalling to Christians the dogma of the unity of men in Jesus Christ, and for stirring them up to put in practice that power which they possess of co-operating, by means of prayer, in the establishment of this unity, which is at once the salvation of the world and the chief end of the coming of the Son of God? Is it not even along this way that the Spirit of God is urging those souls which are most docile to His action? For He is making them feel those impulses of proselytizing which perhaps had never shown themselves in like degree among simple laymen. Every day and at every point of the Church, we see new indications of this flame of zeal burning in truly Christian hearts.

We have then to make answer to the clearest call of Providence, and to the aspirations of a countless number of souls, and to the most pressing needs of the Church and of the world. To do this we form an association which, without imposing on its members any burdensome practices that may be incompatible with their other duties, furnishes them with the means of utilizing all their practices of piety and even their most indifferent actions for the salvation of their brethren, the triumph of the Church, and the regeneration of society.

## APPENDIX TO FIRST PART.

*On true devotion to the Sacred Heart, and its relation with the Apostleship of Prayer.*

[This first part of the work of Father Ramière—*on the nature of the Apostleship of Prayer*—needs to be completed by his own words written nearly ten years later, “to solve certain difficulties more than once brought up by persons whose opinion was of great weight” with him. *Messenger*, 1867, I. 361.]

Let us examine in turn the nature of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and that of the Apostleship of Prayer. Once we have clear ideas on this twofold subject, we shall easily see whether it is possible or right that these two devotions, which we are reproached with blending together, should be separated from each other.

### I.

As to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we know the following, from the words of our Lord, from the witness borne by Blessed Margaret Mary, from the authority of the Church, and by the clearest reasoning :

1. The *object* of this devotion is not alone the material Heart of our Saviour, but it is also and especially the unutterable love whereof this adorable Heart is the instrument ;

2. The *end* which Jesus Christ has in view, when asking for a particular devotion to His most loving Heart, is most of all to obtain a return of love from men, and then, under the impulse of such love, to stir us to reparation of the wrongs He is constantly called to endure.

From these two principles follows a first consequence: the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, when well understood and properly put in practice, is simply an intercourse of close and generous friendship between this Divine Heart and the hearts of men.

Friendship, St. Thomas tells us, is a love of good-will (*benevolence*), returned, and accompanied by a mutual communication of good things.<sup>1</sup> This definition could not be more completely realized than it is in the devotion to the Heart of Jesus. For its object is the most touching manifestation of the good-will of Jesus Christ toward men; and its end is to stir up men to an unbounded devotedness to Jesus Christ. Wherever then this devotion is taken up and understood, it cannot fail to bear the fruit for which our Divine Saviour has so toiled and suffered. It will bring forth new friends to Jesus Christ, and thus satisfy the desire which He made known to His Apostles at the moment of fulfilling His last sacrifice for winning their love. *I will not now call you servants. . . . But I have called you friends.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1. 2., q. lxxv. a. 5. & q. xxii. a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, xv. 15.

By thus laying down the distinctive character of this devotion, we exclude none of its particular points of view. We still keep for the practices in use among the faithful all their usefulness. Let them honor the representations of this Divine Heart, let them have recourse to It for every kind of grace, let them take It as their Model and strive to make reparation for the great wrongs It is ever enduring. All this goes perfectly well along with the essential end that has been pointed out. A Christian who is really the friend of Jesus Christ, will of himself perform all these practices of devotion, either in consequence of his love or in order to keep it alive. But the performance of all these practices together, unless his heart were kindled with the love of friendship for the Heart of Jesus, could never be considered as a well-understood devotion to the Sacred Heart.

St. Thomas' definition tells us in what the love of friendship consists, distinguishing it from all other love by three marks: 1. it is a mutual love, that is, returned; 2. it is a love of good-will or benevolence; 3. it does not content itself with a barren affection, but is ever accompanied by a mutual communication of good things.

The Christian who is desirous of giving Jesus Christ love for love already fulfils the first condition. But after this sincere desire, what is the prime duty of his friendship, what has he still to do?

According to St. Thomas, he has to love God

our Saviour with the love of benevolence—that is, he must not follow after Him solely with a mind to the advantages he hopes to receive from Him. Such a love (which theologians call the love of *concupiscence*) is quite different from the love of benevolence.

What is the essential difference between the one love and the other ?

St. Thomas again tells us, that by the love of benevolence we wish the good of the person loved, whereas by the love of concupiscence we refer his good to ourselves. The first, in a way, makes us to go forth from ourselves and devote ourselves to the happiness of another ; the second refers to self the affection had for others and the services bestowed on them. In one word, the first is disinterested, while the second is bound up with personal interest.

But to be friends of Jesus Christ, must Christians sacrifice their true interests to the interests of their Divine Friend ? Is this the meaning of love being disinterested ? Clearly not, since God makes it a duty for us to seek in our union with Him the only interests worthy of being prized by us—those of our eternal happiness. We can not say it too often—what the love of benevolence demands of us is not the sacrifice, but the blending of interests.

One of the old-time pagans understood well this first condition of all true friendship, when he said : “To wish the same and reject the same—this makes up a solid friendship.” But our Divine Saviour has

shown us this far more perfectly in His discourse after the Last Supper, which we rightfully look upon as the testament of His love. He shows us the supreme type of friendship realized in the union existing between Himself and His Father, and to this He wishes we should draw ever nearer and nearer.

*O Father, . . . I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world. And all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me: that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.*<sup>3</sup>

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should realize this last wish of His love. It should work between us and His Divine Heart a union so complete as to make us love what He loves and hate what He hates, desire what He desires and take to our heart all His interests, rejoicing in all His joys, being saddened by all the wounds given Him, uniting our prayers with His and working with all our strength to carry out His plans. It should fulfil the words of St. Paul: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*<sup>4</sup> Then, and then alone, will it attain its end, for then it will make of us true friends of our Divine Saviour.

<sup>3</sup> St. John, xvii.

<sup>4</sup> Philippians, ii. 5.

## II.

In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, thus understood, we at once recognize the Apostleship of Prayer. For we do not see in the Apostleship of Prayer a special practice, but rather a spirit of devotedness, impelling the Christian to take to his own heart the interests of the Heart of Jesus, to make all Its intentions his own, to pray and act and suffer in union with Its prayers and sacrifices. We have the right to say that the Apostleship of Prayer, thus understood, is one and the same thing with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is not only one of the principal practices of that devotion, but it is no exaggeration to say that it is its very essence. For the essence of this devotion is friendship between the Christian and Jesus Christ, and friendship essentially consists in the blending of interests and feelings between the hearts which it unites.

This is still clearer if we look at friendship under its third condition—the mutual communication of good things—and seek its fulfilment in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. *Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it: if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Canticles, viii. 7.

The love which has mere creatures for its object at times calls forth the most generous sacrifices. What then shall not be done by the love doubly divine in its Source and in its Object—which the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has to awaken in our hearts? It is St. Paul who has put the most beautiful phrases of this devotion on our lips. He expresses its effects, in its present relation, by a wondrous word which he says was our Lord's own: *Remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how He said—It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.*<sup>6</sup> In this word we find the key to the whole existence of our Saviour. It is the explanation of His Incarnation, of His toils and sufferings, of His death upon the cross and of that mystic death which He undergoes daily on our altars. It is truly the word of the Heart of Jesus, Its rule and manner of action, and, if we may say so, Its whole system. But manifestly, it should also be the rule and standard of all our own relations with the infinitely generous Heart of our Saviour. Are we truly devoted to Him? Then assuredly we shall not refuse to *receive* the good things He has in store for us; but we shall feel the need of *giving* Him something in our turn. We may never succeed in making real sacrifices to Him, for we can never hinder Him from giving us infinitely more than we have given Him. But even though we are sure beforehand of being conquered in the

<sup>6</sup> Acts, xx. 35.



generous strife, we will at least never lay down our arms. We shall give ever more and more, and ask of the Heart of Jesus, Which inspires us with this quenchless need, to furnish us daily with new means for its contentment.

Such a means the devotion to the Sacred Heart does indeed furnish us, for it gives us the Apostleship of Prayer. It teaches us to unite our prayers with the prayers of this Divine Heart, to blend Its intentions in one with our own, to animate with these divine intentions all our actions and our sufferings. Thus it puts us in a condition to give to our Saviour what He prizes most in this world—to give Him souls. By His own words and through the mouth of His Apostles, He exhorts us to pray for the salvation of our brethren.\* Hence He is our warrant for believing that by our prayers we may obtain for them graces they would not have received without us, and, also, that we may bring forth to the Blood of God, poured out for our souls, a fruit It would not have borne without us. But if Jesus Christ has given us this power, if with Him and by Him we may all become saviours of souls, then this power furnishes us a very easy and very effective means of becoming the benefactors and the creditors of this Saviour Whose generosity

\* [Here Father Ramière refers back to the entire *Introduction* of this book, showing that, in his own mind, these words we have ventured to add as an appendix, properly round off and complete this first part of his work.]

is so infinite. We owe all things to Him ; but shall He not be in our debt if, by our zeal, by the fervor of our prayers, by the generosity of our sacrifices, we bring into heaven souls which, without us, would have been forever lost ?

Now, if such a power is in our keeping, are we allowed not to make use of it ? First of all, as a matter of course, we must make to our Divine Friend the gift of ourselves. But if, along with ourselves, we can give Him the souls of our brethren, can we refuse them to Him ? We see His Heart shedding for us and for these souls the last drop of Its blood ; and we know that by praying and suffering with Him we can prevent the loss of more than one soul. Is it possible for us not to grant the easy co-operation which is the only cost of winning for Him so great glory ? And could one who would so act, flatter himself that he was the friend of his God, or persuade himself that he practised as he ought the devotion to His Divine Heart ? It is clear that this devotion will not fulfil the third law of friendship unless, in some way, it put in practice the Apostleship of Prayer.

Thus we have entered into the inner meaning of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and studied its nature in the certain light of reason and of faith, seeking out its essential conditions. These conditions we see perfectly realized in the Apostleship of Prayer. We have the right to conclude that

the Apostleship of Prayer, far from excluding any practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart, is itself in the chief place among all such practices—that there is a close tie so uniting it to the devotion as to make of the two in reality but one and the same devotion.

Nothing would be easier than to confirm our conclusion by the words of the Saints who have best known and most ardently loved the Heart of Jesus. There is not one among them all whom His love has not led to pray fervently for obtaining the full triumph of this adorable Heart and the salvation of the souls redeemed with His blood.

## Second Part.

*On the Advantages and Seasonableness of the  
Apostleship of Prayer.*

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER,  
A LEAGUE OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

CHAPTER I.—ITS ADVANTAGES TO THE INDIVIDUAL.

“ II.— “ “ SOCIETY.

“ III.— “ “ THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

“ IV.— “ SEASONABLENESS.

“When may we look for the hour of God’s great mercies—when shall we see, in souls and families and societies, that plentiful outpouring of His blessings of which devotion to the Heart of Jesus is the pledge?

“When there shall be fulfilled the first part of that prophecy, so full of comfort, which we may look to as the first of all the manifestations of the Sacred Heart: *I will pour out upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced. . . . In that day there shall be a Fountain open to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner* (Zacharias, xii., xiii.).

*Father Ramière, Messenger, 1883, I., 12.*

## THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER,

### ITS ADVANTAGES AND ITS SEASONABLENESS.

In the first part of this work we have made known the nature of the Apostleship to which the Heart of Jesus invites all Christians. We have proved its reality and measured its power. We have examined the foundation on which God Himself has rested its unfailing efficacy; we have disclosed the deep well-springs of its exhaustless bounty. For this it was necessary to enter into the innermost sanctuary of Catholic doctrine, and to bring in turn before our eyes the highest teachings of theology concerning grace and the supernatural life of the soul, association and its wonderful privileges, the co-operation of Christians with Jesus Christ and the double bond of union that makes them sharers in His divinity.

It is not one of the least titles to esteem possessed by our subject, that it should have this close connection with whatever is deepest and highest in revealed doctrine. Such teachings demand, on the part of the reader, a certain amount of effort; but this is amply compensated by the enjoyment he experiences at taking in, from a single point of view, the luminous heights of that science which is divinest and best fitted for mind and heart.

This second part brings us to a new line of thought. We shall here estimate the advantages which the Apostleship of Prayer, when seriously taken up, offers to every Christian, to society, to the universal Church. To make ourselves sure that our estimate is exact, we must, of necessity, enumerate all those supernatural good things which go to make up the Christian's wealth, and we must study the conditions of the progress and well-being of societies. Then we shall bring ourselves face to face with the present needs of the Church, with her hopes and her fears, everywhere finding clear proof of the seasonableness of this work.

## CHAPTER I.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER: TO THE INDIVIDUAL.

These advantages are of more than one kind. First of all, they are the *merits* gained for us by the Apostleship, either by multiplying our good works or by giving to each one of them a higher value. Secondly, they are the *satisfactions* which we are thus enabled to offer to God's justice for our faults, and consequently the power thus given us of freeing ourselves from the penalties of the life to come. Thirdly, there is the power of pleading (*impetration*), that is to say, a power thus communicated to us over the Heart of God for obtaining whatever we ask in our behalf. Finally, there is the *strength* and *peace* thus poured out in souls, by freeing them from the disquiet that troubles and weakens them. A few brief developments will be enough to bring us face to face with the reality of these different advantages, and to make us rightly estimate their value.



ANALYSIS. I. *The Apostleship of Prayer, a source of merits.* Merit described—a spiritual capital. Conditions of meritorious act: state of grace—supernatural motive. Nature of the intention required. Merit only lost by mortal sin—regained in full by penance. Causes of increase of merit: perfection of motive, example in Apostleship of Prayer—the twofold love of our neighbor—charity and the Apostleship; fervor of will, intensified. Thus the Apostleship increases number, pure intention, and fervor of meritorious acts.

II. *The Apostleship of Prayer, a source of satisfaction for faults.* Means of satisfying temporal penalty for sins. Threefold increase in the satisfying power of supernatural actions: sorrow—charity—good done to neighbor; exemplified in the Apostleship—nature of penance—zeal, the flame of charity—alms to souls, the pardon of offences.

III. *The Apostleship of Prayer, a means of obtaining from God whatever we ask.* Prayer, a universal instrument. The conditions of friendship: mutual love—sharing of good things. God our Friend—miracles granted to the Saints. The Apostleship fulfils conditions of friendship.

IV. *The Apostleship of Prayer, a source of peace and comfort.* The good of peace. Self-seeking, the cause of spiritual disorder—examples even in piety. God alone, and not His gifts, even of grace, satisfies the soul. The Apostleship removes self-seeking—a way of peace.

## I.

The Apostleship of Prayer, a plentiful source of merits.

Merits are the riches—as it were, the spiritual capital—of the Christian. We may apply to them with entire exactness the definition which economists give of capital, namely, it is the excess of production over consumption, made use of for still further production. In fact, the capital of a merchant increases by all that part of his gain which he denies himself from spending and which he makes use of for yet further gains. Just so the Christian, whose every work is productive of divine glory, denies himself the enjoyment of this glory while he is on earth, and makes use of his gains only to become capable of gaining yet more. In the same way gold and silver, stowed away in coffers, bring no present enjoyment, and they have all their value from the good things for which it is possible to exchange them. So too the merits which the Christian wins by his good works seem useless here below; their worth will be understood only when they shall have been exchanged for as many degrees of everlasting happiness.

Merit, therefore, is a right to the happiness, to the very glory of God—a title to a share, more or less abundant, in the heavenly inheritance. Now this inheritance is nothing less than the fulness of the divine life of Jesus Christ, which is communicated to

us on this earth by sanctifying grace. Hence it follows that each of the actions done by the Christian under the influence of such grace, gives him a right to the possession of the glory of his Divine Head, and is consequently a meritorious act.

Not alone then do acts of perfect charity and great sacrifices—the effects of heroic virtue—possess this wondrous fruitfulness. It belongs also to every act of the Christian in a state of grace, when he acts under the impulse of a supernatural motive. It is every work, even the most indifferent, that is united by its intention with the works of Jesus Christ. It is every suffering, every action, every word, every thought of the day which is offered up to God, from the morning light, by a fervent act not afterward retracted. Yes, everyone of such thoughts and words and actions and sufferings, apart from those which self-love may have polluted with its poison, must bring forth without fail a fruit infinitely more precious than any created advantage that can be imagined. For it is a fruit divine and eternal, a degree of God's own bliss. Yet more, even those works wherein, with more or less deliberation, the influence of self-love should be mingled are not for that reason altogether devoid of merit, unless this poison so infects them at the root and so vitiates all their substance that it shuts out all praiseworthy intention from the will.

What is still more wonderful and consoling is

that merit once gained can no longer be lost, except by mortal sin. Negligence and lukewarmness and venial faults, even the most deliberate, cannot deprive the soul of the least degree of merit that has been gained by previous good works. This kind of capital, unless altogether thrown away, cannot be lessened, and even must always go on increasing. For it is impossible that the most tepid soul, so long as it remains in a state of grace, should not from time to time perform some supernatural act.

Last of all, and it is the height of these wonders, mortal sin does not so far destroy merit as to take away its power of springing up again, so soon as the sinner comes back to God by penance. For, by a miracle of God's goodness which is not known enough nor admired enough by Christians, that penance which so entirely reduces a sin to nothing that no following sin can make it to live again, has also the power of making alive once again all the merits which a grievous fault had struck with death. In this way the greatest criminal who returns to God by an act of sincere contrition, regains, and that at once, the merits of all the good works performed by him and of all the Sacraments received by him during the course of his life ; and these are increased by the merit of the act of contrition he has just made.

This is what the most accredited Doctors of the Church teach on the subject of merit.

Thus every supernatural act done by a Christian

in the state of grace is meritorious. But such acts are far from all meriting in the same degree. There may be among them any number of differences. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, at the age of twenty-three years, had acquired an immense sum of merits; and St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi saw him, after his death, shining with such splendor among the other Saints, that she would never have believed, she says, there had been so much glory in heaven. How had he been able in so short a time to amass so great a treasure? Is there in the spiritual life some secret of leaping rapidly into fortune, and of gathering from the least good works the very greatest revenues? Yes, without any doubt such a secret exists, and the Apostleship of Prayer furnishes us with one of its easiest and most profitable applications.

Two causes help to increase the merit of a work—the perfection of the motive and the fervor of the will.

Thus, a work done because of the advantage we hoped to draw from it for ourselves is much less meritorious than a work, in itself perhaps much less painful, but done singly in view of God's goodness. For, as we have said, sanctifying grace—or, what comes to the same thing, charity—is the source of merit. Our works are so much the more meritorious as they have a more direct relation with this queen of virtues. It is true that charity influences all the supernatural actions and thoughts of a soul in the

state of grace. But this influence has a great preponderance in those acts which have no other motive than the special motive of this virtue, that is, God's goodness. Moreover, it is clear that our acts must be so much the more meritorious as they are diviner and more like to those of God Himself and of Jesus Christ, our Pattern and our Model. Now, the life of God is the love of His own infinite goodness. *God is charity; and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him.*<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ, too, lived for the love of God's glory. This love was His food, His strength, His rest, His consolation. And since this is so, it is also clear there is scarcely a more powerful means to increase speedily our merits than the Apostleship of Prayer seriously put in practice.

For, in reality, what does this work do for us? It places before our eyes the very motive which is the most perfect of all, the motive of God's glory—the sole object of His sovereign will and of all the aspirations of Jesus Christ. It impels us to forget self, that we may occupy ourselves with this great interest only, may employ ourselves with our whole strength in its advancement, and may consecrate to it all our influence and all the fervor of our desires. It tends to animate all our actions, all our prayers, each beating of our heart and each breath of our bosom—absolutely our whole life—with this sublime intention. Thenceforward, even should it add to our

<sup>1</sup> I. St. John, iv. 16.

ordinary works not one action, not one sacrifice, not one prayer the more, the Apostleship of Prayer would still singularly increase the merit of each of our days, yes, of each moment of our existence.

As this point is of primary importance in the spiritual life, we do not fear to linger a little upon it.

In the performance of our supernatural works, we may seek after three kinds of benefits; God's glory, our own spiritual advantage, and the profit of our neighbor. Yet these three aims do not constitute three different motives. In the supernatural order there are only two kinds of motives, and consequently only two kinds of love, which theology names the love of *concupiscence* and the love of *benevolence*. The first makes us seek before all else our own happiness; and, as we know we can find this happiness only in God, we therefore determine to unite ourselves with Him. The second makes us seek God's glory before all else. We unite ourselves with Him because He is infinitely lovable, and we bring back everything to Him, even the happiness which He promises us.

Thus the love of *concupiscence* is the love of ourselves in God and of God because of ourselves. It is supernatural self-love. The love of *benevolence*, on the contrary, is the love of God for Himself and of ourselves because of Him. It is pure charity, the love of God pre-eminently.

Such are the two principles of all our tendencies,

and in some sort the two roots of all supernatural love. The love of our fellows may spring from either one or the other of these two roots. To love those like us purely for themselves, at least with an efficacious love, is impossible. There can be only one of two things, either we shall love them in God, Who is the common Father of us all, or else we shall love ourselves in them. If it is in God that we love them, we shall love all without exception; for they are all created to His image, all are destined to possess Him along with ourselves. In Him, and in Him alone, all men, no matter how far removed they may be from us by their birth, their habits, or their interests, become *our neighbors*. But if, on the contrary, we love ourselves in them, we shall love only those who love us and whose society brings us some advantage. This second kind of love of our fellows may also be supernatural, because the advantages we look for from their society may belong to the supernatural order. Yet it shares in all the imperfections of the love of concupiscence, and the acts of which it is the main-spring have only a merit of far lower degree. On the contrary, the love of all men in God in no wise differs from the love of God Himself. The love of God is charity considered in its centre. The love of one's neighbor in God is this same charity considered in its boundless expansion. The motive is the same, and the merit is consequently equal. To separate them is impossible. How, indeed, can we love God



without loving all that He loves? If we recognize in Him our Father, it is impossible that we should not recognize in all His children our brethren, and that we should not extend even to them the affection we have for Him. If we are fully devoted to His interests we cannot be indifferent to the destinies of souls whose salvation cannot be separated from God's glory. On the contrary, our zeal for them will be in exact proportion to our devotedness to Him.

Divine charity is possessed of a twofold movement that makes up its life. Like the human heart, which is its most perfect counterpart in the material order, it has a movement of contraction and a movement of dilatation. It beats without ceasing from God to souls and from souls to God. It unites itself more closely to God's goodness, which is its centre, only that it may give itself up more entirely to the works of zeal that furnish it with its food. In default of exterior labors, it will find in its own interior—in prayer—an exercise equally efficacious. But it is as impossible for it to forget souls as to forget God.

Now the Apostleship of Prayer constantly places before the eyes of Christians the boundless needs of souls and stirs them to devote themselves to the sanctifying of souls. Clearly, therefore, it is calculated to develop charity in Christians, and consequently to give to all their works that superexcellent merit which goes along with the perfect exercise of this virtue.

It must not be thought that by thus stretching out our aims we lessen the effective desire of our own sanctification, or enfeeble the love which we owe to those nearest to us. Far from loving ourselves less when we love ourselves for the sake of God, on the contrary, we love ourselves far better and much more. Charity is stifled so long as restraint is put upon it, and it gains in intensity whatever it gains in reach. Who will ever desire happiness more ardently than did the Heart of Jesus? This desire is essential to every reasonable will, and in Him it was measured only by the boundless energy of His faculties. What heart was ever more tender, more grateful, more devoted than His? And yet in Him these affections which were so real and this desire of happiness which was so ardent were subordinated to a love yet more powerful, to the love of God's goodness, for Whose sake He loved all men. But this subordination was far from depriving those other sentiments of any part of their vitality. On the contrary, it gave them a strength equal to their purity, because it enkindled them with all the flames which the Heart of Jesus was ever drawing forth from the furnace of God's love.

The Apostleship of Prayer will produce in our own hearts a like effect. It will give to all our affections—and consequently to all our works, which are the outward manifestations of our inmost affections—strength, purity, and the merit of divine charity. It will do yet more. It will give our charity a price-

less warrant, and will preserve it from an illusion that is only too likely to assail it. When we look upon God in Himself alone, we are much disposed to consider Him selfishly and to seek, almost unconsciously, in that charity which we believe most pure the sweetness and the advantages it brings along with it. The Apostleship of Prayer makes such an illusion next to impossible. It obliges us to go forth from ourselves, to love God outside of ourselves. It is unceasingly occupied in overturning the barriers that would shut in narrow bounds our charity, and would lessen the merit of our works by contaminating the purity of our intentions.

Moreover, it increases merit in another way; for the purity of our intention is not the only thing by which this is measured. Besides the perfection of the motive, we must take into account the fervor of the will. For, of two acts quite similar in all else, the one may be performed with an intenseness of love, with an effort of the will, far greater than the other; and reason agrees with theology in saying that the former will be by far the more meritorious. But our reason also tells us that the will will be so much the more stirred to put forth all its energy, as it pursues a nobler and more momentous aim. When does the soldier feel himself animated by the most irrepressible courage? When does that noble intoxication of spirit seize hold upon him, which makes him blind to danger, insensible to wounds, and capable of

superhuman effort? It is when he is but a hand's breadth away from the rampart, and there is no alternative left him but certain death or glorious victory. Now, such a stake may be compared with that which the Apostleship of Prayer is ever placing before us. At each moment it shows us the souls of our brethren, members of Jesus Christ, who are being lost while we might save them. What Christian, seeing one of his brethren falling into the abyss, would not make an effort to save him? It is this sight which the Apostleship of Prayer is constantly placing before our eyes. Should it not enkindle in us courage and fervor and generosity? Should it not make each of our works the work of a fervent will, since it may help to the salvation of our brethren? What merit, consequently, will not our works acquire from it?

Let us add to this that, once we are pierced through and through with such lofty thoughts, we shall not be content with the works and prayers that we might otherwise have performed. We shall have an activity like that which is put forth in great dangers. When a terrific flood or a vast conflagration breaks out, the man who before was slowest and most undecided becomes prompt and determined. Then he *lives* more in a single hour than in a whole day of ordinary circumstance. This explains the speed with which the Saints have lived, and the power they have had of *fulfilling a long time in the*

*short space* of their earthly existence.<sup>2</sup> We shall imitate them as soon as we understand that each of those moments, which we now let slip from us with so pitiable a want of care, might be used for the saving of a soul, for gaining for some dying one the final grace of contrition, for procuring to God some further degree of glory.

Thus our supernatural acts being multiplied will be done with purer intention and greater fervor, and the Apostleship of Prayer will have laid open to us three abundant sources of merit. Who can calculate the proportion in which these three united causes are able to increase our wealth? Not the mind of man nor the spirit of an angel, but the intelligence of God alone; for this increase has no limit and its measure is beyond our valuing.

<sup>2</sup> Wisdom, iv. 13.

## II.

The Apostleship of Prayer, a plentiful source of satisfaction for our faults.

Supernatural works have not only the virtue of meriting future blessings, they have also the virtue of *satisfying* for past faults.

We know indeed that penance, by remitting in the sinner's favor the eternal penalty due to his mortal sins, often leaves him liable to a temporal penalty, which he must undergo either in this life by willing expiation, or in purgatory by an expiation beyond all measure more rigorous. To this debt, which is the outcome of deadly sins whose guilt has been blotted out, is to be added that which we contract for venial faults. And of these—in spite of our best purposes, alas!—we become guilty every day. Who can tell how far this debt would go on increasing, did not God's goodness furnish us with some means of extinguishing it?

Happily, this means has not been denied us. Every painful act willingly undertaken, every involuntary suffering freely offered up to God, and even, in a general way, every supernatural action united with the satisfaction of Jesus Christ by a soul in the state of grace in order to obtain the remission of faults, unfailingly works this effect, to some degree.

But such remission has not always the same completeness. Three chief causes may increase the satisfying power of our works ; the sorrow which goes along with them, the charity that inspires them, and the consoling results which follow in our neighbors' behalf. In the sorrow which we inflict upon ourselves, or take upon ourselves freely, God's justice finds a compensation for the wrong we have done Him. In the love with which our satisfaction is animated, God's mercy finds a reason for giving up His own rights. Finally, in the good we do to our brethren God, our common Father, sees, as it were, a debt which He has contracted toward us, which obliges Him to remit to us our own debts. This is the reason why, in the Holy Scriptures, the complete remission of our sins is sometimes attributed to penance, sometimes to charity, and then again to almsgiving and mercy shown to our neighbor. On one side, the Holy Ghost tells us that, to bend God's justice, we must do penance in sackcloth and ashes : *Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping and in mourning.* On the other hand, He assures us—*Charity covereth a multitude of sins.* Again, *Alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins. Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor.* And finally, *Forgive, if you have aught against any man, that your Father also, Who is in*

*heaven, may forgive your sins. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.*<sup>3</sup>

It is easy to understand how, in the Apostleship of Prayer, these three causes that increase the satisfying merit of our works, act together and are raised to their highest power.

First of all, the exercise of such an apostleship is an act of *penance*. What is it that, according to theologians, constitutes the inmost essence and entire merit of the virtue of penance? It is the sorrow felt by the soul when it sees the rights of God unworthily trampled upon, and the movement by which it is borne to avenge them. In this sense Jesus Christ, Who had in Him no shadow of sin, could yet do acts of penance and show Himself the perfect model of this virtue, as well as of all others. Exterior penances draw all their value from this inner hatred of sin, to which belongs in the highest degree the power of satisfying God. Now the Apostleship of Prayer, well put in practice, is a continued effort toward the destruction of sin. We have seen a shining example of this in the Prophet Daniel devoured with grief at the sight of the sins of his people and the iniquities that were overflowing the earth. It is impossible to be closely united with the Heart of Jesus without offering oneself along with Him in a continual sacrifice for the crimes of men. Clearly, to enter into

<sup>3</sup> Joel, ii. 12; I. St. Peter, iv. 8; Tobias, xii. 9; Daniel, iv. 24; St. Mark, xi. 25; St. Luke, vi. 37.



this spirit is also very effectively to expiate one's own faults.

*Charity* has the second title to this power of expiation. It cannot be wanting in our Apostleship, for the reason that this is simply charity under its divinest form and in its exercise the purest and strongest and completest. And if charity, according to the comparison of St. John Chrysostom, has the power of consuming sins as utterly as a devouring flame eats away the trees of the forest, what must not be said of the zeal which is the flame of this divine fire, and of the Apostleship of Prayer, which is zeal systematized and made stronger by association?

Finally, the Apostleship of Prayer is the most useful *alms* we can give to our neighbor. Our Divine Master has said, *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.* He has also given us to understand that the good spirit, that is, divine grace, is the true bread which the Heavenly Father is ready to give to our souls, and which He never refuses to our prayers. *If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the good spirit to them that ask Him?*<sup>4</sup> When our pious insistence has gained for our brethren this food for their souls, we have done more for the remission of our own sins than if we had nourished their bodies.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matthew, iv. 4; St. Luke, xi. 11, 13.

We should notice, too, that prayer in behalf of our neighbor's soul is also the best means of pardoning him those offences of which he may be guilty against ourselves, and consequently of placing upon God, in virtue of His solemn promises, the obligation of pardoning our own offences. Often the heart is so ulcerated that it is with great pain we can bring it to pardon truly and absolutely. Let such a heart pray for those from whom it believes an injury has been received. Let it ask for them from God, in spite of all the repugnance of feeling, heaven's happiness and every kind of grace. Soon, beneath the sweet influence of prayer, the heat of anger will be cooled and the heart will find itself not only ready to pardon, but to love for God's sake those whom before it could not keep from hating.

We have reason then to say that the Apostleship of Prayer is not only a plentiful source of merit, but also a source equally abundant of satisfaction for our sins. We pass on to its further advantages.

## III.

The Apostleship of Prayer accredits us before God, and is a sovereign means of obtaining from God whatever we ask of Him.

The riches of the Christian are not alone made up of the merits which he gains and the payment of the debt which he has contracted by his faults toward God's justice. They consist also in the power given him of drawing on God's treasury, and taking from it by prayer whatever God Himself can take therefrom by His power.

We have explained to what degree the power of prayer is infallible, when there is need of obtaining for our brethren spiritual graces. But its power is not limited to this single class of favors; it reaches out to all things. In the hands of God's friends it is a universal instrument, serving them in every use whatever, offering comfort in temporal needs as well as in their spiritual necessities. It puts all nature at their bidding. It is a kind of heavenly charm, against which there is no resisting. Saints are seen to work miracles, as if in play. You would say that the Almighty had made Himself their servant, and that to act He waited only for the bidding of their prayer, as with Josue, *the Lord obeying the voice of a man.*<sup>5</sup>

To be convinced of this, and to understand how

<sup>5</sup> Josue, x. 14.

far the Apostleship of Prayer is calculated to give us this boundless credit before God, it is enough to recall to our minds that, according to Catholic doctrine, the charity which unites God to man is a true friendship.<sup>6</sup> It has always had this character. For, in every time, even under the Old Law, man was destined to enjoy the happiness of God and to share in all His blessings. But under the New Law, God has become in some way our equal and by taking upon Himself our nature has communicated to us His own. Thus the conditions of our intercourse with Him have become immeasurably more suited to the conditions of true friendship. He Himself declared, on the eve of the day when by His death He was to complete that sharing of all His good things with us which He had already made, that henceforward He wished to behold in us only friends. *I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends.*<sup>7</sup>

What then is the nature of friendship? Is it a love of pure benevolence? Yes, without doubt, for its name alone puts aside all inclination of self-interest, every idea of making use of a friend for our own purposes as we would make use of an animal or a field. And yet, who will venture to say that friendship repels, or that it does not seek after that

<sup>6</sup> St. Thomas, 2. 2. qu. xvi. art. 1. [See also *Appendix to Part I* (this edition), for summary by Father Ramière.]

<sup>7</sup> St. John, xv. 15.

satisfaction which springs from the close intercourse and honorable good offices of which it is the source? The truth is that friendship, well understood, excludes even the possibility of such a doubt. As St. Dionysius the Areopagite has said—it is a living bond which out of two hearts makes but one. It sets up between them such a union and identity that each of the two loves itself in the other, and the other in itself. There is no longer then any opposition, in true friendship, between the love of good-will or benevolence and the love of concupiscence or desire. There is no more a preference for one interest over another than there is in the love which we bear ourselves. When the mother sacrifices her personal satisfaction in behalf of her child, she does not believe that she has made a sacrifice; the real sacrifice for her would be to act otherwise. So it is in all true friendship. The friend hesitates not to sacrifice himself for his friend, because good things and evil being held in common by them, neither of the two considers that lost to himself which is gained for the other.

Such are the laws of friendship. St. Thomas reduces them to two: the mutual love which of two hearts makes but one, and the sharing in each other's good things which puts in the possession of each whatever is held by both.

God knew these laws when it pleased Him to choose wretched and sinful men for His friends. How could He help knowing them? Their only

source is in Himself, they are merely the expression of the ineffable relations which unite together the Three Divine Persons. He knew them, and He was the first to subject Himself to them. He has loved us, He has given over to us His own good things, and He is ready to make this communication yet completer, in the measure in which, on our side, we better observe the conditions of this contract. These conditions the Saints have observed with all the faithfulness of which human weakness is capable. They have forgotten themselves, to live only in God and for God. What ought to be verified in their favor, what actually has taken place? God, their Friend, has not been willing to see Himself conquered in generosity. To make recognition of their sacrifices, He has not feared to multiply miracles.

These miracles, due to the prayers of the Saints, are the necessary and the natural outcome of the first and highest of all the laws that rule the moral world. If we look at them from this standpoint, we have the right to refuse to call them miracles. The real miracle would be if things were otherwise, if a soul utterly devoted to God did not obtain from Him whatever it asked. When a stone is thrown upward from a man's hand there is no miracle, although such a movement is contrary to the nature of the stone left to itself. In this case the laws of its nature are controlled by the laws of a higher nature, and the only miracle would be that the latter should not produce

their effect. Apply this principle to the laws of friendship, under whose sway God has promised that He will refuse nothing to the man who refuses nothing to Him. We shall then understand on how solid a foundation rests the almightiness of the friend of God.

It is therefore of the highest moment to ask by what means we can go forth from ourselves, and fulfil on our part the great condition of divine friendship.

This means is ready to our hand. The easiest and the surest of all means is the serious and constant practice of the Apostleship of Prayer. By practising this we in some way forget our own interests, whether they are of time or even if they are spiritual. In our preoccupations the first place is secured for God's glory. We pray, we labor, we suffer for souls that are strangers and even unknown to us, solely because our Lord loves them and they are to glorify Him for all eternity. This is indeed to confound our own interests with those of His Heart. This is indeed to act toward Him as faithful spouses to each other, as a true friend to his friend. This is to fulfil the duty which He Himself declared to St. Teresa, after He had loaded her with ineffable favors. "Henceforward, as My true spouse, you will make My honor your only care." We cannot doubt that this uninterrupted practice, along with self-renouncement, and even more than the renouncement which prepares the way for it, is the great channel of the generosity of

heaven, the secret of possessing ourselves of the power of the Almighty, and the true art of working miracles.

#### IV.

The Apostleship of Prayer, a plentiful source of peace and interior consolation.

To be almighty is a great thing for man, naturally so weak, and the art of working miracles is very precious; but there is something yet more precious and to be desired—interior peace.

Peace is the supreme good of our present life. All men seek after it, whether they know it or not. Peace is to our heart's desires and the soul's faculties what the harmony of its strings is to the harp, or the balance of all its separate parts to a vast edifice, or the smooth running of all its wheels to some powerful and complicated machinery. It is what the harmony of their movements is to the celestial bodies. But while outside of us order and peace everywhere reign, how rare is this accord of all our desires, how difficult to obtain is this harmony of our faculties! What disorder, for the most part, prevails in the interior workings of our soul! The wheels in their running are in opposition to each other. Certain life-springs are so pressed down that all their play is lost, or else so worn and tense that they become unstrung. Why is this opposition, this strife and wrenching asunder, this tearing apart of a substance which in itself is spiritual and simple like God?



We might say that the soul is punished in this manner for her unfaithfulness to her Author, and for refusing to obey the glorious law He has given her to unite herself with Him and to become like unto Him in all things. But in that case souls that faithfully keep the law of God ought to taste the sweetness of peace. And yet, how great is the agitation and disquiet even of souls sincerely Christian ! How few outwardly show forth the true marks of interior peace ! On the contrary, the great number are but causes of trouble and uneasiness both for themselves and for others. Where are the *peace-makers*, the true *children of God*, Whose *peace* shall spread out *as it were a river, an overflowing torrent* of blessings to all around ?<sup>8</sup>

They are seldom to be met with, yet we must not be surprised. Among so many who aspire to the honor of God's friendship, there are so few who practically and generously accept its conditions, who are willing to forget self to think only of the interests of their Heavenly Friend. It is much, they think, to renounce guilty satisfactions, to divorce themselves from flesh and blood, to consecrate themselves entirely to piety and good works. But when they go aside from the turmoil of the world they carry with them their self-love and their self-seeking, which perhaps they fancied they had left behind. Their selfishness is not dead, it has only changed its state ;

<sup>8</sup> St. Matthew, v. 9 ; Isaias, lxvi. 12.

instead of losing anything, it has gained. It will no longer be given for its nourishment that gross food which humbled it without appeasing its hunger. It will now be nourished with a more dainty satisfaction, with the fragrance of purer praises, with the esteem and friendship of nobler souls, with the most subtle feeling of its own excellence, and with spiritual consolations. No one can fail to see that such self-seeking in piety, if not a grievous fault, is nevertheless contrary to that utter blending of our own interests with the interests of God, which alone warrants our expecting the liberalities of this faithful Friend.

Let us not mistake ; so long as this is the manner of our action there is no peace to be hoped for. We shall still be a prey to disquiet and trouble, and that in proportion to the dominion which our heart gives to self-love.

Then, truly, nothing can receive its full satisfaction in us, not nature and not grace.

Not nature, because our nature thirsts after certainty and duration and the Infinite. Now this sweet nourishment of our self-love, even though it be spiritual, can never be infinite or certain or durable. True, it is no longer the mire of sensual pleasures, it is no longer the tarnishing flame of earthly honors and riches ; but it is still that which is created, and consequently it is uncertainty, agitation, emptiness—essential attributes of every creature and of every movement impelling toward creatures. It is in vain

then that we seek in these joys of piety the full satisfaction of the natural desires of the heart.

Still less have we a right to expect from them the satisfaction of the supernatural needs produced in us by divine grace. If the human heart, even when given over to itself, can find its full content only in the possession of God, what shall the Christian heart do, that is to say, the heart of man united with the Heart of God and become the dwelling-place of that Divine Spirit Which is the substantial Love of God? How can the heart that has become divine be satisfied with any created nourishment, however heavenly it may seem? What else than God can appease those *unspeakable groanings* which the Holy Ghost causes to burst forth from the souls over whom It has mastery? How can this Spirit of God, Which has been given us only to lead us to perfect union with God, that is to say, to make us go forth from ourselves and clothe ourselves with God's life—how can It suffer us still to rest in self and endeavor to taste here below those joys and that glory which shall be ours only in heaven? Can It allow us to make an evil and selfish use of the fruits of our Saviour's death, to waste and consume like children those goods which have been given us only for purchasing God and enriching us with His own bliss? No, so long as we thus mistake God's wishes and our own true interests, so long as we do not look upon piety as a continual and perfect sacri-

fice, grace will give us no repose. It has created in us divine faculties, which demand a divine food. So long as we strive to satisfy them otherwise than with God they will inflict upon us all the torments of hunger.

With pious souls that seek after other things than God, the more adorned they are with high virtues and heavenly gifts, the more cruel will be their suffering. For the jealous care of God Who loves them increases with His love for them; and the demands of the Holy Spirit are so much the stricter as Its bounty is greater. Each new degree of grace is a new impelling of the soul toward God. It is an additional spring in a mechanism already powerful. The soul cannot show herself unfaithful to it without her resistance causing a disorder like that which is produced in the human body when a limb is wrenched from its place, or in the heavenly bodies when a planet wanders from its orbit.

From all these considerations it results that the way of peace for us is that which leads us forth from ourselves, lifting us not only from flesh and blood, but above all personal self-seeking, above all selfish satisfaction and all, even the subtlest, self-love, and above all covetousness, even that which is most spiritual.

Does the Apostleship of Prayer open such a way before us? Yes, for it opens to our sight the boundless horizon which embraces every interest of God

and souls, and it says to us: All this is yours, because all this is the inheritance of Jesus Christ, your eldest Brother. *For all things are yours, and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*<sup>9</sup> The great cause at stake on the field of battle is your cause, for the reason that it is the cause of God your Father and of the Church your Mother. This limitless realm is the sphere of your activity. In all its vastness there is not a single point which you cannot reach by prayer. There at will you can give play to all that is lofty in your desires and unbounded in your ambitions. There all your faculties may find their full exercise. This is the only atmosphere fit for the Christian's heart; everywhere else he would be stifled. To the souls on whom grace has bestowed its divine wings, every limited horizon can be but a prison. They are impelled by the breath of God, rest is as death to them, and constraint of their action is but agony.

It is thus the Apostleship of Prayer brings us to look upon our position in regard to God and all creation. It shows us in the narrowness of our heart and the lowness of our views the true cause of all our interior troubles.

O soul, do you now understand why you are so often sad, and why after brief moments of sweet consolation there follow soon disquiet and unrest? *Why art thou sad, O my soul? And why dost thou trouble me?* But when we at last understand where wisdom

<sup>9</sup> I. Corinthians, iii. 22-3.

and virtue and intelligence are found, where there is length of life and plenteous food, where there is the light of the eyes and the peace of the heart, then let us not hesitate to enter upon this way, to go forth from self and to fill ourselves with all the fulness of God. *Learn where is wisdom, where is strength, where is understanding: that thou mayest know also where is length of days, where is the light of the eyes and peace . . . That you may be filled unto all the fulness of God.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Psalm xli. 6; Baruch, iii. 14; Ephesians, iii. 19.

## CHAPTER II.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER : TO SOCIETY.

The Apostleship of Prayer could never right the balance of souls and calm all their inner unrest, without also furnishing the surest of all remedies to the unrest and the disorder of society.

These social advantages which we have proclaimed may spring from two sources : from the spirit of zeal, which is the prime mover of the Apostleship, and from the spirit of prayer, which is the instrument of its influence. If we consider this with the slightest attention we shall understand its importance to human society in general, and also to all the different societies in particular.

ANALYSIS. I. *Advantages to society from diffusion of spirit of zeal.* Social theories and evils. Three bases of society, in law of charity—twofold relation of superiors and inferiors, mutual love. Present disorder—Christian remedy, application by Apostleship—true views of temporal and eternal. Example from St. Paul—progress and peace in the Church.

II. *Advantages to society from diffusion of spirit of prayer.* Work of prayer in societies—progress in science, art, industry. Prayer, the remedy against materialism social evils, trouble—heals self-sufficiency, the obstacle to God's protection.

## I.

The advantages which result to society from the diffusion of the spirit of zeal.

There was never a time when men were more taken up with social theories than in our day. Yet there was never a time when society was so sick, when its organization suffered so grievous injury, when its foundations the most essential were more seriously shaken.

All society rests on three bases, alike necessary to its stability and its well-being. These are the paternal devotedness of superiors toward inferiors, the hearty subordination of inferiors to their superiors, and the mutual love of the different members for each other.

These three conditions are summed up in the great law of charity. This divine law, when applied to the three kinds of relations that constitute every society, makes superiors act as true fathers toward their inferiors and causes them to see in their authority an obligation to greater devotedness. The inferiors, instead of cursing their subordination, receive with love and gratitude the direction given them by their superiors. Finally, all the members joyfully submit to those sacrifices which insure to society the incalculable good of concord and union. It is not necessary to prove that, in every order of



society, this harmony which is so much to be desired has been gravely troubled. Selfishness more and more tends to substitute itself in place of charity, in the relations of the members of society among themselves, as well as in the mutual relations of superiors and inferiors.

We need not speak of civil society, whose revolutions are causing the earth beneath our feet to tremble. In the family the father's authority is given up of itself, and fades away ever more and more in face of the children's insubordination; while in the heart of brothers the voice of blood and nature no longer has strength to stem hostile interests.

This is the case in the first of all societies, in that which serves as the foundation of all others and which has for its fountain-head the very instincts of nature. What then must be the case in those societies whose members are naturally only too prone to look upon each other as strangers, if not as enemies?

The evil then is a real one, and it is also clear that it is a serious one. What is far from being so clear to us is the remedy which must heal and give back health to the social body, no matter how deadly its wounds may seem.

Yet for Christians this remedy cannot be far to seek. They will find it in that Divine Name which brings with itself the healing of the peoples as well as the salvation of individuals—in the name of Jesus.

*Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.*<sup>1</sup> They will find this remedy in the blood which flowed upon the Cross from the Saviour's veins and which remains in the hands of the Church, to be applied for the divine healing of all the evils of men. They will find it, last of all, in His Heart, Which remains present in the midst of us as an ever open fountain of love and life.

Such, beyond all doubt, is the sovereign remedy prepared and offered by God's hand to society in its hour of danger. And we here declare that one of the happiest applications to be made of this remedy, is that which comes from the Apostleship of Prayer.

In truth, what is needed? Simply to open the way to divine charity, that it may enter into hearts with its influence and impel them onward to the high and sublime end which God has set before them. But men will never suffer themselves to be borne on toward this lofty end, unless they begin by fixing their attention upon it. They will not be touched with the great sentiments of charity, so long as their thoughts remain imprisoned in the narrow range of personal interest. Selfishness will not come to an end, so long as, in the practice of virtue itself, everything is brought back to self-interest. Would you take from selfishness all its power, and break the spell with which it fascinates poor human hearts?

<sup>1</sup> Acts, iv. 12.

Do you wish society to find once more its true balance, so that superiors may place all their glory in making themselves the servants of those beneath them and so that inferiors may think themselves happy in obeying, while all shall seek, as for some gain, an occasion of making sacrifices for the happiness of others? Then you must put back into their place all the wheels and workings of the social mechanism. It will be an easy thing, once the interior of souls has found again its order and its harmony. Show the different members of temporal societies their true relationship with the great society, the heavenly family, of which God Himself is the Father. Make them understand that to each one of them has been entrusted a share in the eternal interests of this great family, that their recompense in a better life shall be measured, not by the rank they have held here below, but by their faithfulness and devotedness. Make them look upon this earth as a single point in the boundless home of God. *O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession.*<sup>2</sup> The time they shall pass here, whether holding authority in their hands or subject to it, whether rich or poor, is as a moment lost in the infinite series of ages. Force them no longer to look upon themselves in self, but in God Who calls on them to exchange their nothingness for His perfection. When this has been done they will

<sup>2</sup> Baruch, iii. 24.

no longer be tempted to shut themselves up in their own nothingness. They will cease to be dazzled by the splendor of their riches or their power, and to be cast down by their state of dependence and privation. Superiors will exercise their authority with humility, and inferiors will nobly practise obedience. All will understand the worth of sacrifice, and he will esteem himself the happiest who has found the most meritorious occasion of serving God in his brethren.

This is what the Apostleship of Prayer does. It suffers not that we should bound our looks and thoughts for a single moment to the narrow limits of those earthly societies of which we form a part. It is like the guide who leads the traveller to a high mountain, whence his eye takes in the whole boundless horizon and where the inequalities of the plain fade utterly from sight. Thus the Apostleship of Prayer places us at a standpoint so high and wide in its command that it becomes impossible for us to take any account of our position of inferiority or superiority here below. It shows us heaven as the everlasting kingdom of which all of us alike, by a common title, are the presumptive heirs. Life is the time of our minority, of our education. Material creatures are our servants. Our superiors and the ministers of the Church and even the Angels are charitable aids appointed by God to help us in fulfilling our destiny. Jesus Christ is the only Master we

are bound to obey, and the only Judge to Whom all of us are bound some day to give account of our actions. Last of all, the glory of our Divine Saviour and of God His Father is the supreme interest entrusted to us, it is the common end which all of us alike can attain, though by different ways, and in the pursuit of it a greater or less fidelity is to be the measure of our happiness.

This is the divine remedy which the Church of Jesus Christ brings forward against selfishness, and by this she anticipates the dissensions which tear asunder the social body and arm its members the one against the other. It is the only means used by St. Paul to heal the divisions which had risen up in the Church of Corinth. *For, whereas there is among you envying and contention, are you not carnal, walking according to man?*

*For while one saith, I indeed am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollo, are you not men? What then is Apollo, and what is Paul?*

*The ministers of Him Whom you have believed: and to everyone as the Lord hath given.*

*I have planted, Apollo watered: but God gave the increase.*

*Therefore neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

*Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one. And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.*

*For we are God's coadjutors: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building. . . . Let no man therefore glory in men.*

*For all things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: for all are yours:*

*And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.<sup>3</sup>*

This sublime picture should be ever before the eye of the Christian, that he may learn to go forth from himself and to put God's views in the place of the low views of his own self-love. Through such lofty sentiments the Apostleship of Prayer will reward the efforts of those who sacrifice their selfishness in supernatural things, to think only of God's interests. If they are in command, they will see in all who obey them the heirs of God's kingdom, whose glories they shall share according as they make its acquisition easy to others. If they are under obedience, they will see in their superiors the living images of their infinitely good Father, Who is preparing for them an everlasting glory in heaven. And in their equals they will see fellow-men, all whose gains will only increase their own reward and all whose losses will lessen in equal measure their own treasures.

The Christian who rises to the level of these sentiments and knows how to dwell there, will never use authority without devotedness nor obey without love. It is impossible he should not be willing to

<sup>3</sup> I. Corinthians, iii.

give men the most painful services. A society wherein such views should be always held would enjoy a changeless peace, a strength beyond all power to vanquish, and the joys of consummate well-being. A family, any community, a city, a state, that should be firmly settled on this foundation, would have reached the ideal of perfection, and would find in the union of its members, in the ardor of devotedness that would animate them, the true fountain of all progress.

Why do not men who speak so much of progress open their eyes? They have taken upon themselves the high mission of bettering the condition of their fellows and of reforming all society. They should no longer seek in fantastic realms for the paradise which they dream of bringing to this earth. They would find it in the bosom of the Catholic Church, where for eighteen hundred years it has been open to all societies, in the measure in which they follow the sublime lights of faith and the divine inspirations of charity.

Whence come the union, the peace and the happiness, that reign in religious communities in the midst of the strictest poverty and privations of every kind? Assuredly, it is the work of the power which charity exercises over souls, of the self-denial with which it fills them where their personal interests are concerned, of the burning zeal which it enkindles in them for God's glory and their brothers' good.

Give free way to the Apostleship of Prayer to awaken feelings so peculiarly its own—in families and in states and in every human association—and, by destroying selfishness which is their bane, it will give them new life and will become a powerful aid in developing every element of their prosperity.



## II.

The advantages which result to society from the diffusion of the spirit of prayer.

This blessed influence of the Apostleship over society will be so much the more efficacious as the spirit of prayer—a principle of divine fruitfulness—is more widely spread abroad.

Prayer, we have said, is a supernatural breathing. It draws into our soul the air of heaven, the breath of God's charity, the life of grace. Our conclusion has been that without prayer the soul can only be stifled and perish. It is no less certain that without prayer societies can neither live nor develop themselves. Each bond that unites men one with another owes to prayer its strength and its elasticity. For it can obtain its full effect only by bringing man nearer to God, and this power can come to it only from prayer. It is man's love for himself which ought to lift him unceasingly toward God under penalty of lowering him even beneath his natural dignity. So too the relations of man with his fellow-men cannot be of real use to him except inasmuch as they render easy his upward tendency toward God. Not only is prayer, in society, the fountain-head of moral blessings, of true charity, of generous benevolence, of solid devotedness, of holy undertakings and good examples; it also gives life to those elements

of social perfection which, at first blush, seem profanest.

Prayer secures the progress of science ; for it alone can keep alive in the understanding that burning thirst for truth which makes it overcome every obstacle, and that distrust of self which avoids every hidden rock. It alone maintains the balance between the docility which welcomes the lessons of experience and the hardihood that strikes out along ways yet unexplored. The wise man who does not pray will, almost without fail, fall a victim to the intoxication of presumptuous pride or to the weakness of discouragement, and on either side he will go farther and farther from the truth. It has been said justly—The seeking after truth is nothing else than a natural prayer. But how much greater would be the warrant of success if such prayer became supernatural, uniting the understanding with the Incarnate Word Who is the fountain of all light, and with God's Spirit, the source of all wisdom !

Prayer aids to the progress of the arts. The arts are a continual aspiration toward infinite beauty, an effort unceasingly renewed to express by brush or pen or chisel that ideal perfection which dwells in the Divine Intelligence, and some reflection of which the human intelligence can see in creatures. Who does not see the likeness of this upward striving and aspiration with prayer ? The only difference between these two things is this—the artist's aspiring is with-

out any certain foundation, has no well-defined procedure, no settled aim; whereas Christian prayer, to lift itself up to God, rests on the infallible foundation, and to reach Him takes a way that cannot fail of leading to the end, while it beholds God's goodness under that form and feature with which He has been pleased to clothe Himself that He might become visible to our gaze. Prayer then is the only certain way to the ideal, it is by way of eminence the procedure of true art. At the same time it is the heavenly fragrance which alone can prevent art from becoming material and corrupt.

Again, it is prayer alone that can prevent industry from lowering souls to the level of the material results they follow after. Whatever high-minded souls may be among us agree in pointing out this danger. They deplore that society should be brought down to barter away the priceless goods of the moral order in exchange for the progress which industry is realizing in the physical order. Is it not, in very truth, fit subject of lamentation that man can increase his power over matter only by losing his empire over himself, and that his thoughts grow narrow in proportion as his wonderful inventions reach further out? Others may seek means, more or less ingenious, of destroying this antagonism between spirit and matter. The easy and practical means proposed by God Himself is prayer. When the love of prayer holds sway in society, industry, without

losing anything of its forward impulse, will be freed from all its dangers.

Of itself, industry is no evil. There is no abuse in thus daily increasing our sway over matter by force of genius; for God has given man rule over it by creating him. But the crime would be to subject man to the tyranny of matter by a shameful abdication of his rights, by lowering himself to its level instead of lifting it up with himself. When this crime shall have become the crime of all society, prayer alone will be able to deliver us from it, by giving us an energetic impulsion toward God and moral good, an impulse so much the more necessary as we are the more forcibly pushed onward to earthly enjoyment.

It is thus prayer will render fruitful those elements of progress which God has deposited in the bosom of human society. It brings forth, in the heart of each individual man, the virtues indispensable to his perfection; and then it alone heals and uplifts and even makes divine the profanest relations between him and his fellow-men.

Prayer is also the remedy, universal and efficacious, for the evils of society.

Take a family, Christian enough in a way, but a prey to the most cruel trials. The material straits it suffers are the least of its sorrows. Floods of bitterness, as from so many poisoned life-springs, overwhelm it—the division of interests, opposing views,

moody antipathies and aversions of character ; and these day by day bring into its midst wranglings far more painful than every privation. What if the members of such a family begin praying with fervor ? Parents and children and brethren, brought down to despair, at last feel the need of God's help. They draw near to Him by the Sacraments and by daily supplication. Soon concord takes the place of dissension, well-being succeeds to want, a river of peace renders fruitful the land once so desolate.

Listen to the words of the Holy Ghost : *Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.* In the destiny of societies as in that of individuals, God wishes, and indeed ought, to show Himself as God. By His nature He is infinitely generous, and He is pleased to give His protection to the heads of families as to the heads of states, whenever, by the humility of their prayers, they make sure the rights of His glory. But He cannot, without being wanting to Himself, grant them His protection, so long as they set themselves up in self-sufficiency and become their own gods. The Lord has said it—*I will not give My glory to anyone.*<sup>4</sup> How many bitter disappointments, how many household griefs, how many revolutions and bloody disasters have been occasioned by such pride, and might have been prevented by prayer !

<sup>4</sup> Psalm cxxvi. 1 ; Isaias, xlii. 8, xlviii. 11.

## CHAPTER III.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER :

#### TO THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

ANALYSIS. End of the Apostleship, to destroy individualism and make minds *Catholic*.

I. *Usefulness to preservation and well-being of the Church.* The Church, Christ's mystical body—the continuation of the Incarnation. Her outer and inner life—grace, the condition of her preservation—dependence on prayer and sacrifice of just souls.

II. *Usefulness rests on Communion of Saints.* Communion of members in living body—Saints in glory—Christians in grace. The Apostleship, a collecting system of prayers—a communion in actual graces.

III. *Usefulness for defence and increase of the Church.* The Church's mission to souls, to dead and already living—by apostles. The Apostleship and missions.

IV. *Usefulness for bringing forth and developing apostolic vocations.* Zeal from prayer—the appeal of souls.

V. *Usefulness for drawing closer the bonds uniting all the members of the Church.* Charity from union of prayers—the Apostleship, an aid to the Church's spirit—gift of creature to Creator.

VI. *Conclusion—the Apostleship a pledge of predestination.* The warrant of final perseverance—merit of spiritual works of mercy—Our Lord in sinners. Thoughts of Saints and holy souls—of Doctors—of the just of the Old Law.

ADVANTAGES THAT SHOULD RESULT TO THE WHOLE  
CHURCH FROM THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER.

It is not alone various particular societies that are to feel the happy influence of that spirit of zeal and of those lofty views of faith, which are spread by the Apostleship of Prayer. Manifestly, the larger part of these advantages must come back to the Church, that is, to the supernatural society of souls, to that divine city whereof these lofty views are the light and this spirit of zeal the life.

There is nothing more opposed to the interests of the Church, nothing narrower and consequently less *Catholic*, in the primitive sense of the word, than the spirit of individualism which the Apostleship of Prayer is calculated to destroy. A great number of souls owe to the Church all their moral well-being, all their consolation, their hopes, their life itself. Yet how deplorably little they think of her, or occupy their minds with what concerns her, or put themselves out of the way because of her dangers, or suffer because of her griefs! Is there not in this indifference, with which so great a number of Catholics look upon the interests of their Mother, a lamentable disorder?

This consideration of itself might well make us feel the usefulness of a work which has for its only end to heal this disorder, and to spread among Christians, along with the love of the Church, an understanding of her interests and a knowledge of the happenings, good or ill, which concern her. But we shall feel this better still if we reflect with some little attention on the nature of this holy society of souls, and on the conditions of its well-being.



## I.

Usefulness of the Apostleship of Prayer to the preservation and well-being of the Church.

We have already spoken of the Church. In her we have admired the pre-eminent association, the most perfect image of the ineffable society of the Three Divine Persons, or rather the extension of this divine society of light and love to Angels and to men, through the mediation of Jesus Christ—true Son of God by His divine nature and true Brother of men by His human nature.

Doubtless we are not now inclined to see a simple figure of speech—high-sounding words without sense—in St. Paul's definition of the Church when he names it the mystical *body of Jesus Christ*.<sup>1</sup> We are acquainted with the conditions of the existence of this body, of which holy baptism has made us members. We know that this body—at once divine and human, visible and invisible, of heaven and of earth—is destined to unite earth to heaven, bringing into one single whole the material and the spiritual creation, making men to live of the very life of God. It has for its head the Incarnate Word, for its soul His Divine Spirit, for its chief spokesmen and means of action the Apostles and their successors in the priesthood, for its members all the faithful, for its duration eternity.

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians, v. 23.

Again, the Church is often called by St. Paul,<sup>2</sup> from yet another comparison, that structure whose materials God makes ready on earth, only to transport them some day to heaven. Jesus Christ is the first foundation; the Apostles are the secondary basis; doctors and bishops and priests are its pillars; all the faithful are its stones; grace is the cement binding them together; charity and the other virtues are its priceless ornaments; the glory of eternity is the crown of its magnificence.

Last of all, the Saviour Himself, in His discourse after the Last Supper, describes the Church for us under the figure of a fruitful vine that stretches out its branches into all the world. Its finest shoots are already flowering in the everlasting springtime of heaven, but others are still exposed to the storms of earth. He Himself is the vine, and all men should be the branches. All are called to unite themselves with this divine stem, and in it to bring forth the fruits of life.<sup>3</sup>

In all these touching comparisons it is the same idea which is set before us from different points of view. They clearly aim at making us look upon the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation, as the successive communication, to the different generations of men, of that holiness and blessedness of which the Son of God possesses the fulness by right of birth. In a word, they put the Church before us

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians, iv. 11-2.

<sup>3</sup> St. John, xv.

as the complement of Jesus Christ. For *it is His body, and the fulness of Him Who is filled all in all.*<sup>4</sup>

A few moments' delving in this sublime idea is enough for understanding the advantages which the Church cannot fail to receive from the Apostleship of Prayer.

This holy society of souls, as we have just pointed out, is at once visible and invisible.

It is visible in its mortal members, in its earthly existence, in its outward action. It is propagated by the speech of men ; by sensible signs it confers the grace which Jesus Christ has entrusted to its care ; by sensible rites too it offers its sacrifice. Under this point of view, as under all others, it is the perfect image of its Divine Spouse. He too made use of outer and sensible means to work His miracles and spread abroad His grace and teach His doctrine.

But this outward life of Jesus Christ was the least part of His real life. The works of His hands and the words of His lips drew their power from the Holy Soul in which they had their source and from the Divinity Which penetrated them with Its almighty power. So the exterior life of the Church is but a faint reflection of the light that shines upon it and the heat of the Holy Spirit that enlivens it. *All the glory of the King's daughter is within.*<sup>5</sup> Her members draw their strength and their fruitfulness from their union with God's Spirit. They can have life

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians, i. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm xlv. 14.

only on condition of being ever in communication with their Divine Head and receiving from Him unceasingly that supernatural grace which is as the life-blood of this great body.

Such is the nature of the Church. Hence her preservation cannot depend solely on the outward action of a few of her members. Even those whose existence is most hidden, whose influence is exercised only by spiritual means—by prayer and sacrifice—must help as effectively as the others toward her support and well-being.

If we consider the human body, it is not the feet and hands, the eyes and mouth alone that labor for its preservation. Every organ does its share in the common work, without any interruption. It is difficult, of course, to explain the action of the different organs on each other; yet who would deny it? The most interior organs, those whose mechanism and play are quite shut out from our examination, have the strongest action and the most important and necessary functions to perform. Even when their action is manifested exteriorly, the moving principle is hidden. By secret and mysterious ways, by means and springs that are lost to all our searching, this action is communicated from one member to another and spread throughout the body. What could the arms do, if the heart for a single moment ceased sending to them through the arteries the blood necessary for keeping them alive? What could the

eyes see, if their communication with the brain through the nerves were broken off?

This is the case with a body whose whole existence is animal. How then can we find it strange in a moral body, in a society that is entirely spiritual, whose life and action and end are supernatural, that the different members should act upon each other, often without any outward seeming of it? We admit that God's grace makes the life of the Church. Therefore we cannot doubt that the just soul has so much the more power for increasing this life as it is more pleasing to God, and as its virtues give it greater credit with Him. We can easily understand what advantage would result from the intercession of such souls to the pastors and ministers of the Church in the exercise of their stern and dangerous duties.

Bossuet unfolds this truth to us, not only with the mastery of his genius, but with the authority, far more imposing, of Catholic tradition.

The explanation given by this great man is found in his discourse *on the Unity of the Church*. "Often, says an early Father, light comes to those who teach from the prayers of those who listen. Whatever good is done in the Church, even by the pastors, says St. Augustine, is done from the secret impulse given by the innocent doves that are scattered over the whole earth. Simple souls, souls hidden from the eyes of men, most of all hidden from your own eyes, yet knowing God and known of

Him, where are you that I may direct my words to you? But no, there is no need of my knowing you. The God Who knows you and Who dwells in you, can bring my words, which are His own, into your hearts. Lowly souls, innocent souls, whom God's grace has turned from all the vanities of the world, it is your prayers that I ask. In acknowledgment of the gifts of God, of which the seal is placed on you, pray without ceasing for His Church."

## II.

The usefulness of the Apostleship of Prayer rests on the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

There is no further need of insisting on this power, possessed by all the members of the Church, of co-operating in the measure of their degree of grace and holiness to the preservation of the whole body and the spiritual growth of all its other members. This truth is a part of our faith. It is the Communion of Saints, in which we daily profess our faith when we recite the Creed.

This doctrine, so consoling yet so little known, is a consequence of the fundamental dogma which we have already laid down—the real and very close union of all Christians with Jesus Christ. How indeed could they all be closely united with their Divine Head, unless they also were in communion with each other?

In a living body each of the members cannot be in relation with the head, unless at the same time it is in relation with all the other members. Thus they exercise, each upon the other, an influence that is mutual and constant. The eye directs the hands and the feet, while the hands and the feet are set in motion for the defence and preservation of the eye. If the least part is wounded, the whole body suffers from it. On the contrary, the well-being of each of the mem-

bers reacts favorably on the well-being of the others. Those which are hidden far within the body and whose action is utterly beyond our sight, are far from being shut out from this communion of good and ill ; on the contrary, they have the largest share in it. If they suffer, their pains are much more keenly felt by the other organs, just as their health contributes far more powerfully to the health of the whole body.

There is something similar to this in the great body of the Church. We express it in these words : *I believe the Communion of Saints.*

These words in reality have for their meaning that all the members of this divine body—whether in the full possession in glory of the perfection of holiness, or possessing its substance by habitual grace, or again having naught of it but its first beginning in faith and submission to the Church—are united by a true community of interests. They form among themselves, in the strictest sense of the word, a society in losses and gains, in such a manner that every increase of life and holiness acquired by one of them flows back on all the others, just as every loss incurred by the least among them is felt by the greatest.

This is clear of the Saints in heaven. The happiness of each one among them has, of course, for its essential and primary object the Divine Essence alone ; and consequently, under this point of view, it is independent of the happiness of the others.



Yet it is beyond question that, over and above this substance of their bliss, they draw enjoyment of infinite sweetness from the society of those other spirits which, along with them, contemplate the Divine Essence—from the sight of their beauty, from the love uniting them together, and from the communication they make each other of every joy. Theology calls this the *accidental blessedness* of the elect. Each chosen soul, therefore, which enters heaven increases for all the dwellers in that place of delight the sum of their happiness; and this increase is in the measure of its own blessedness.

What has been said with regard to the communication of glory among the members of Jesus Christ, who are already come to the splendors of their true country, is quite as real with regard to grace among the members of that same body who are still journeying in the shadows of exile.

Grace, as we have said, is but the beginning of glory. It is the divine life in its growth and in its struggles, as glory is that same life in its fulness and its rest. But in these two states this life is communicated equally through the body of Jesus Christ, from the Head to the members and from each of the members to all the others. Should one member die the death of sin, the strength and beauty of the entire body would suffer injury, as the health of a robust man is injured when a single arm is paralyzed. On the other hand, when a dead member comes again

to life, or even, like an Augustine or an Ignatius, acquires a more than usual strength and an heroic sanctity, then the whole body is reborn with him and feels itself filled with a new vigor.

This strict dependence of the members of the Church, one upon the other, would be sufficient of itself alone to prove the lawfulness of an institution whose end should be to revive and increase the zeal of all for the common interest, to make the strong understand the need they have of help and the weak the power they possess of strengthening their brethren. It would establish, as it were, a world-wide collecting system, in which all—rich and poor alike—should draw by prayer from the exhaustless wealth of God's goodness the riches with which they are to increase the common treasure.

The usefulness of such an institution will appear all the better from an attentive consideration of the needs of the Church, and of the exact nature of the Communion of Saints which we have just set forth in its general aspect.

The great need of the Church is prayer. By prayer this divine body is lifted above the atmosphere of earth, where it works out its time of trial, to breathe its native air. Prayer is the channel through which the graces that nourish its life are poured out. The more prayers there are in the Church the stronger she is; the lessening of prayer causes her to languish; and she would die, were it possible, on the day when her members ceased to pray.

Prayer is a vital function, and it is sweet and easy in itself. Yet everything here below tends to make us careless in its exercise. The ordinary Christian living in the world is turned away from it by his business. The religious in the solitude of his retreat too often meets a hindrance to its due performance in the activity of his own mind. The priest, in the midst of the fatigues and distractions of his ministry, finds hardly time for it. Woe to us, woe to the whole Church, if we yield to these hindrances! As for the Church, we have said it, the maintenance of prayer in her bosom is a question of life and death. The highest of all services, then, that can be rendered her is to spread this spirit, to impress upon all the prime importance of this duty, to promote the formation of those *organs of prayer* of which we have already spoken, that is to say, of souls that give up their whole life to do what so great a number of Christians utterly forget. In this way they readjust the balance in danger of being upset by a fatal forgetfulness.

Here too it may be allowed us to speak out against the incredible blindness of certain Christians who permit themselves to call in doubt the usefulness of those religious institutions which are devoted solely to prayer.—What is the use, they say, of houses whose inhabitants pass their whole life in the idleness of prayer? Has not God placed us on earth to labor, did He not impose on us the precept

of labor after the fall of Adam? It must therefore be an excess to take up one's whole life with prayer. —Agreed, this is a falling into excess: at least it is to step aside from the general path, by an exception that will never be multiplied beyond measure. But this excess, if it be such, is necessary to correct an excess infinitely more dangerous. Man is made to weary his body by toil, but he is also made to exercise his soul by prayer. The health of the whole social body, and of the Church in particular, demands that these two duties shall be fulfilled with equal faithfulness, that prayer shall lift up hearts on high while labor bends foreheads to the earth. Of these two duties the most important, beyond contradiction, is that which impels society toward its perfection; and this is forgotten by the greater number of men. Their criminal excess, therefore, must have its reparation, and others, who devote themselves in their stead, must cast all the weight of their prayer into the balance which so many by their forgetfulness tend to throw on the side of death.

We remarked, in addition, that a more exact definition of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints would help us to understand better the usefulness of the Apostleship of Prayer.

What are the supernatural good things which Christians possess in common? From what has been said at the beginning of this second part, it follows that they are of more than one kind. First

of all, they are *merits* properly so-called—the fruit of supernatural acts, measured by the degree in which each one possesses sanctifying grace. Next, they are the *satisfactions* which each one is able to offer to God's justice, in place of the chastisement which has been merited by his faults. Moreover, they are *actual graces*, which give strength to perform supernatural acts and to acquire merits. Last of all, they are *consolations* and supernatural favors.

Is each of these different kinds of good alike the object of the Communion of Saints? No: the first—merits properly so called—are the inalienable property of the one who acquires them. Jesus Christ alone, He Who had nothing to gain for Himself, could communicate to us His merits. As to His members, they can gain nothing which they do not need for themselves, and in regard to merit they can gain nothing which is not to be fully given back to them in the glory of heaven.

The Communion of Saints, therefore, is limited to the three other classes of supernatural good—satisfactions, consolations, and actual graces. But these three kinds of riches are far from being of equal importance. Consolations are limited to the short space of this life, and may be sacrificed without the soul suffering any substantial harm. It is the same with regard to satisfactions, although these have a much greater value, inasmuch as they can deliver us from the painful chastisements of purgatory and

hasten our entrance into heaven. Yet their effect does not reach beyond a space of time more or less limited. Moreover, of themselves they do not add the least degree of eternal glory to the treasure of him to whom they have been most plentifully given. Actual graces, on the contrary, by giving us strength to perform meritorious acts and by permitting us to increase the number and value of these acts, stretch out their influence to all eternity, in proportion as they grow in intensity. Hence we must conclude that of all the kinds of blessings which the Communion of Saints allows us to gain for each other, actual graces are beyond all comparison the most precious.

Now this is the end of the Apostleship of Prayer, to stir up the zeal of Christians and to urge them to gain for their forsaken brethren these actual graces, without which they can neither come forth from their tomb nor walk along the way of true life. In other words, the Apostleship of Prayer is the completest realization of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. At the same time, we can do nothing more useful for the preservation of the Church than resolutely to embrace and generously to practise this Apostleship.

## III.

Usefulness of the Apostleship of Prayer for the defence and increase of the Church.

The mystical body of Jesus Christ is not only designed to preserve the life which its Head has gained for it by His death. It is also to communicate this life to men who have it not. This is the end and aim of its existence on earth. The day will come when it shall reach its full development; and then it will have only to enjoy in heaven the blessedness and glory which belong to the body of a God. But meanwhile is its period of growth. So long as it is on earth, it can live only on condition of always extending itself by taking to itself new elements. To increase and renew the life of the souls which have been incorporated with her by baptism, is the first duty of the Church; and this duty she fulfils by means of her pastors and the hierarchy of her ordinary ministry. But this care for the flock that is in the fold—for *the household of the faith*—cannot so occupy her as to make her forget those nations which form a part of the inheritance left her by her Divine Founder, and all those unhappy sheep wandering without a shepherd in the desert of infidelity, who have been given her to be brought into the one fold.

For more than eighteen hundred years the Church has ceased not for an instant to fulfil this

difficult task, and to call to the light of the Gospel all the peoples seated in the shadow of death. It has not been enough for her to call them, to entreat them to receive the life of which they are deprived. But, how pitiful ! she has been obliged to enter into an endless conflict in order to defend against their attacks that divine light which alone could enlighten their darkness. For the blind, in their unhappy state, are not satisfied with choosing the night of their errors rather than the light of truth. They would even quench the light, for it is their own condemnation. To rest more easily in the bosom of death, they would gladly destroy the fountain of life.

The Church has two painful duties to fulfil in her outward life. She has to spread the light and scatter the darkness, to teach the truth and refute error, to raise the dead and protect that which is already in life, to loose the captive and drive back slavery. Meanwhile, within herself she strives to sanctify and heal those members which have been made one body with her by baptism.

The Church exercises this twofold outward mission by a special hierarchy and by the extraordinary ministry of her apostolic laborers. These are heroic men whom the exhaustless life-giving power of her Divine Spouse brings forth in her bosom day by day. These she presses lovingly to her heart, she arms them with the single sword of the Word and she sends them forth to fight against the opposition



of the flesh and all the infernal powers. No tongue can tell the labors borne by these generous apostles, the trials to which they are subjected, the dangers to which they are ever exposed, and the sorrowful travail with which they bring forth their children. Who, indeed, has not heard their groanings and their cries of distress?

Here, most of all, the Apostleship of Prayer is welcome. These laborers are bowed down over their parched fields, they are consumed by the heat of the day and worn out by fatigue. But prayer will send upon them a refreshing dew to give life to their hearts, it will make the soil before them more manageable to their ploughshare. These hunters of souls struggle against a multitude of wild beasts, against whole legions of infernal spirits. The prayers of their brethren will bring down upon them from heaven plentiful graces to increase their courage, to renew their strength, to put their enemies to flight. There is not one among these apostolic laborers who has not already felt sensibly this helpful influence of his brethren's prayers. There is not one who would not bear witness, as did St. Francis Xavier, to these well-nigh miraculous effects of the Communion of Saints. But how much more blessed would be these effects, how much sweeter and more frequent would this experience prove, how much vaster would the success be, if the many holy souls who now, in the world or in their solitude, think only of their own

interests, would reach out their hands with greater fervor to the all-powerful lever of prayer, and by this apostleship which is so easy aid the apostleship, so painful, of preaching and of martyrdom!

Ah! if our own words are not eloquent enough to make souls understand the importance of this duty, they will at least listen to a voice whose authority they cannot deny. It is the voice of St. Teresa. She tells us that, if we wish to please God in anything, we must take time to pray for preachers, for the defenders of the Church, for the wise men who uphold the Church's cause and strive to beat back the ravages of heresy. "My daughters in Jesus Christ," she cries, "help me in praying to our Lord that He will be pleased to remedy so great an evil. For this reason we are gathered together here, this is the object of our vocation, the rightful subject of our prayers, and with this we should occupy ourselves. To this all our desires should tend, and this we should ask unceasingly of God."<sup>6</sup>

To one who should not understand this language and whom words so burning would leave cold and indifferent, we could have but one thing to say: he strangely deceives himself if he thinks he loves Jesus Christ his Saviour, or the men who are his brethren, or the Church he calls his Mother.

<sup>6</sup> *Way of Perfection* (addressed to the Carmelite nuns), chapter i.

## IV.

Usefulness of the Apostleship of Prayer for bringing forth and developing apostolic vocations.

The Apostleship of Prayer may help more efficaciously still to the increase and defence of the Church, by raising up co-workers and rivals of her wonderful laborers.

We may indeed hope that the precious seed of zeal, fertilized by prayer and ever unfolding itself more and more in the heart of the Associates of this work, will stir up and strengthen in them the desire of the missions; and many may feel themselves called to share in the useful toils of the apostles. The ever increasing number of the members of the clergy and the apostolic spirit that seems, more than ever before, to move priests and the very laymen, give promise to the missionaries of strong reinforcements and a flourishing posterity.

Thus we may turn the thoughts and actions of the members of our association toward the foreign missions, and fill them with the importance and greatness of this work; and this not only in the case of the young Levites and pupils in the houses of education, but also with those Christian mothers who have so great influence over the vocation of their children. Beyond all dispute, this would be a high service given to the beautiful work of the missions,

to the unbelieving people whose salvation is to come from the missions, and to the Church of which the missions are the glory. It would be to correspond with God's grace, by pointing out to the many generous hearts that can distinguish themselves in this sublime calling those far-off shores where their brethren are face to face with error, and by fixing their attention on those unhappy nations still buried in the shadows of death, but stretching out their arms to their future deliverers and seeming to address them in touching words: *Pass over the seas, and help us.*<sup>7</sup>

How many souls are called to great things, and yet seem not to suspect their own power unto life, and so consume in idle cares their treasures of devotedness and energy.

Perhaps the Apostleship of Prayer will reveal them to themselves, by sounding in their ears those heart-rending cries of the apostle of the Indies: "How mistaken in their reckoning are all those unfortunate men who turn to their own private advantage the talents and knowledge which God gave them for the good of their brethren! What an account they will have to give one day of their knowledge and their talents! How often it has come into my mind to go over to Europe, even though I should be considered a fool, and passing through the academies of learning, most of all the University of

<sup>7</sup> Acts, xvi. 9.

Paris, to cry aloud to all those wise men who have more learning than fear of God: By your fault a numberless multitude of souls are shut out from the kingdom of heaven, and plunged into the everlasting abyss.''<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> St. Francis Xavier, *Letters*.

## V.

Usefulness of the Apostleship of Prayer for drawing closer the bonds which unite all the members of the Church.

Last of all, a mutual gathering up of prayers like this must have for its result to reunite and weld together in one and the same feeling all Catholic hearts.

The greater glory of God, the salvation of souls, is the end of all the endeavors of its Associates and the only goal of their desires. The union of prayers will strengthen and draw closer among them the bonds of charity. Henceforward, there will be no more of that jealous rivalry and distrust and narrow sensitiveness which too often belittle and paralyze the action of their zeal. Instead of these growths of discord, we shall see vigorous and fruitful shoots of the Gospel Vine, multiplied and interlaced and grown together. All religious bodies, all pious associations, all laborers for Jesus Christ, who sincerely desire to bring forth fruit in Him, will be of one mind. In wondrous harmony they will labor to procure the glory of their common Master and the good of their brethren; and on their side the faithful will work together with their pastors for the same end. What cannot we promise ourselves from so many efforts so well united together?

Considerations like these should be enough to make us understand how far the Apostleship of Prayer

belongs alike to the spirit and to the interests of the Church. The Church has no other mission than to establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ, to sanctify souls, to lead unbelievers to the knowledge of the truth and sinners to the life of grace, *to gather together in one*, by the bonds of faith and love, *the children of God that were dispersed* in a thousand ways.<sup>9</sup> Assuredly, nothing could better aid the Church to fulfil this mission than a work whose aim shall be to place before the eyes of Christians her boundless interests, and to impel them to make use of all their energy and all the merits they may acquire, of all their prayers and actions and sacrifices, of all their sufferings, whether free or involuntary, in hastening the triumph of these interests. How much force is lost, how much endeavor remains barren, how many faculties are paralyzed and souls dissatisfied with themselves, how many natural gifts and supernatural graces are made fruitless, which would find their own conditions of fruitfulness and use and satisfaction if this work came to be universally adopted! What an increase of life would then be in the body of the Church, and what contentment for the Heart of Jesus—for that Heart Which *came to cast fire on the earth* and Which for eighteen centuries wills only, yet vainly, alas! to see the whole world *kindled* with it.<sup>10</sup> A cup of water given to one of His Apostles is to the Christian who thus comforts them in their weariness worth the reward of the Apostles. What then shall

<sup>9</sup> St. John, xi. 52.<sup>10</sup> St. Luke, xii. 49.

be the value of the almsgiving of prayer and of the supernatural grace which is its fruit? *For whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in My name, because you belong to Christ: Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.*<sup>11</sup> To give such help to those who spend themselves for the salvation of souls is truly to labor together with them in making up to Jesus Christ that which is wanting to Him. For the Church, according to St. Paul, is the fulness of Jesus Christ, and it is Jesus Christ Himself Who grows with the growth of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

It is our highest glory to be able, in virtue of our union with our Divine Head, to help according to the measure of the grace communicated to us to give Him new members. *That we may in all things grow up in Him Who is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity.*<sup>13</sup> What an honor for a creature to be able, in some way, to give back to its Creator the being it has received from Him, to give Him perfectness even as He has perfected it, and to assure Him for ever and ever in His members a bliss like in all things to that which the creature awaits from His liberality!

<sup>11</sup> St. Mark, ix. 40.

<sup>12</sup> *The Church, which is His body and the fulness of Him Who is filled all in all.* Ephesians, i. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians, iv. 15-6.



## VI.

Conclusion—the Apostleship of Prayer, a sure pledge of predestination—the thought of the Saints.

We will conclude our exposition of the advantages of the Apostleship of Prayer to the individual and to society, by pointing out the most precious of all. There need be no doubt in asserting it. Such an apostleship, practised fervently and constantly, warrants the Christian in awaiting with confidence from the goodness of his God that grace which is the crown of all others—the grace of final perseverance. How indeed could we imagine that God would cast into hell one who by his sacrifices and his prayers has been the means of saving from it a multitude of souls? How could the Heavenly Father shut out from His household one who has increased His family by many members? How could Jesus Christ, Whose blood the Christian has made fruitful and Whose most earnest desires he has realized—how could He confound him in the same reprobation with those who have labored to destroy souls and have trampled under foot His precious blood?

He has promised to bring to the possession of His kingdom all those who shall have fed Him and given Him to drink, clothed Him and visited Him, in the person of the least of His brethren. If this is the reward of works of corporal mercy, how much

more sublime and how much more certain must be the crown laid up for the far more meritorious works of spiritual mercy! Most of all, in the person of poor sinners does God our Saviour hunger. In them He thirsts, in them He is naked, in them He is brought low to the hardest slavery. In some way He has died when He ceased to live in them. This death of sin which He suffers in the members of His mystical body is for Him the most fearful of all His sufferings. To be freed from it He offered unto God, in the Garden of Olives, His prayers and supplications, with strong cries and plentiful tears. *In the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, He offered up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death.*<sup>14</sup> To be delivered from them He sacrificed His natural life; and He was ready, had it been necessary, to suffer a thousand deaths. How great then should be His gratitude to all those who by their prayers and their sacrifices become in very deed His deliverers. With what love will He not say to them, as He brings all His blessings together for them: “*Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you covered Me: sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me.*”<sup>15</sup> In My own

<sup>14</sup> Hebrews, v. 7.

<sup>15</sup> St. Matthew, xxv. 34-6.

members I had lost My life, and you have given it back to Me.”

We have no longer to hesitate. We must take up with love that which is so glorious for ourselves, so pleasing to our Lord, so useful to the Church and to souls. Thus we shall march on in the footsteps of the Saints of every age, and give ear to their most urgent bidding.

St. Catharine of Sienna says to us: “God takes so great pleasure in the service we render to His Church that we have no words to express it, most of all when such services come from pure zeal for the growth and exaltation of the Church.” On another occasion she writes to a holy priest: “I call upon you to devote yourself with courage to the service of Holy Church. I make the same prayer to those who are of your company, and I beseech you all to occupy yourselves with a holy and pure intention in procuring the good of the cherished Spouse of Jesus Christ. There is on earth no labor more comforting and more useful.”

Thus she offered herself to God, to make reparation by her sufferings for the sins of the Christian people. Her sacrifice was pleasing in the eyes of heaven. Men saw her a prey to unspeakable pains and an object of persecution to the demons, who let loose on her their fury and their rage. For all that she ceased not to pray. Day by day while she was in Rome she went to the Basilica of St. Peter, and

there placed before our Lord, through the intercession of this powerful Apostle, the needs of the Catholic Church. "There," she was wont to say, "I toil in the very bark of the Church." "Most Holy Father," she wrote to Pope Urban VI., "I burn with desire, unworthy as I am, to give my blood and my life and the marrow of my bones for Holy Church."

One day our Lord appeared to St. Gertrude, bearing on His shoulders a lofty and magnificent building. "See," He said to her, "with what toil and sweat and disquiet of every kind I uphold this edifice, which is nothing else than religion itself. It tends toward its ruin throughout the world because so few persons are found in the world who are willing to do or suffer something for its support and its advancement. You must join with Me in My desires, and take upon yourself a part of this burden. For all those who strive by word or action to advance religion are so many strong columns to uphold this holy house, and they bring solace to Me by sharing with Me the weight of this burden."

In every age souls devoted to God have felt themselves impelled to give Him this consolation.

The Venerable Mary of the Incarnation [foundress of the Ursulines of Canada] was wont to say: "In spirit I go round the world to seek for all the souls redeemed by the precious blood of my Divine Spouse. I offer them to God the Father through

Jesus Christ, and by this Divine Mediator I entreat their conversion."

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, enkindled with holy zeal, fifty times each day offered to God the blood of Jesus Christ for sinners. She was devoured with her desires for their conversion. "What pain I feel, O my God," she cried, "when I see how useful I might be to Thy creatures by giving my life for them, and yet I am not free to do so." In all her exercises of piety she recommended sinners to God, and at almost every hour she prayed for them. Often she arose by night, and before the Blessed Sacrament asked for their conversion. One day they questioned her as to the reason of her tears. "I weep," she said, "because it seems to me I do nothing for the salvation of sinners." Especially did she pray for priests, who by their high calling and their holy ministry ought to take the chief part in the work of sanctifying souls.

These sentiments too were found in one of the holiest souls of our day, the foundress of a religious community in France, called the Presentation.<sup>16</sup> "I cannot be at rest, O my God," she said, "so long as there is a corner of the earth where Thou art not known and loved. I have no other comfort whatever than to weep over my own sins and for those of the whole world ; and although my heart is then weighed down by grief, I would not give the

<sup>16</sup> Venerable Mother Rivier.

satisfaction I find in doing this for all the joys of the world, nor even for all the ecstasy and sweetness of devotion.”

The same sentiments are found in another of these pious souls of our day, who founded the House of Mercy at Bordeaux.<sup>17</sup> Beginning with the year 1817, she worked out in her community that association of which we have now traced the plan, by the pious agreements she took the pains to make between her community and the different apostles who set sail from Bordeaux for the foreign missions.

St. Alphonsus Liguori says: “All those who truly love God cease not to pray for poor sinners. Is it possible to love God, to see the love He has for souls, to consider all that Jesus Christ has done and suffered for them and the desire He has that we should pray for sinners, and yet be indifferent for so great a number of unhappy slaves of the demon and not entreat our Lord to enlighten them and to give them the strength to come forth from their deadly state?”<sup>18</sup>

But we have words of yet higher moment from the greatest Doctor of the Greek Church—St. John Chrysostom. He will prove to us that the Apostleship of Prayer simply brings to light, under a new name, a practice which has always been looked upon in the Church as not only very meritorious and perfect, but even as of strict obligation.

<sup>17</sup> *Mademoiselle de Lamouroux.*

<sup>18</sup> *On Prayer*, ch. iii.

He says: "If anyone desires to be pleasing to Jesus Christ, let him have a care for His sheep, let him strive to advance the public good, let him labor to secure the salvation of his brethren. The employment which is most pleasing to God and the greatest proof of love and devotedness to Jesus Christ, is the care which we have of His brethren and the labors we undertake for their salvation. Let all understand this, even those pious solitaries who have gone far away to the summit of desert mountains that they may live there a crucified life, separate from the world and dead to all created things. They too must give aid, according to their power, to the pastors of the Church. They should know that they must bring down the help of God's grace on those who are exposed to so many dangers, and should aid and comfort, in every manner possible to them, those who bear up under the labor and solicitude of so many cares. Even though they dwell afar, unless they do this their mode of life is without merit in God's eyes, and all their wisdom has made shipwreck."<sup>19</sup>

Not alone under the New Law have the friends of God sighed for the perfect coming of His kingdom. It was the object of all the desires of the just of the Old Law. St. Paul tells us: *All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off and saluting them.*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Sermo de S. Philogonio.*

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews, xi. 13.

David, the Prophet-King, exclaimed: *May God have mercy on us . . . that we may know Thy way upon earth, Thy salvation in all nations. Let peoples confess to Thee, O God, let all peoples give praise to Thee.*<sup>21</sup>

As the night went on and the Sun of Justice neared the horizon, the desire for His coming became more and more ardent. There is a prayer of the son of Sirach, which the Church has chosen, rather than any text of the New Testament, to be the epistle of the beautiful votive Mass for the Propagation of the Faith. We can hardly find in the Holy Scriptures a page expressing more touchingly the sentiments which the Apostleship of Prayer is calculated to bring into the hearts of men.

*Have mercy on us, O God of all, and behold us and show us the light of Thy mercies:*

*And send Thy fear upon the nations that have not sought after Thee, that they may know that there is no God beside Thee, and that they may show forth Thy wonders.*

*Lift up Thy hands over the strange nations, that they may see Thy power.*

*For as Thou hast been sanctified in us in their sight, so Thou shalt be magnified among them in our presence:*

*That they may know Thee, as we also have known Thee, that there is no God beside Thee, O Lord.*

<sup>21</sup> Psalm, lxvi.



*Renew Thy signs, and work new miracles.*

*Glorify Thy hand, and Thy right arm. . . .*

*Hasten the time, and remember the end, that they  
may declare Thy wonderful works. . . .*

*Crush the head of the princes of the enemies, that  
say: There is no other beside us.*

*Gather together all the tribes of Jacob. . . .*

*Have mercy on Thy people, upon whom Thy name  
is invoked: . . .*

*Have mercy on Jerusalem, the city which Thou  
hast sanctified, the city of Thy rest. . . .*

*Reward them that patiently wait for Thee, that  
Thy prophets may be found faithful; and hear the  
prayers of Thy servants,*

*According to the blessing of Aaron over Thy  
people, and direct us into the way of justice, and let  
all know that dwell upon the earth, that Thou art God  
the Beholder of all ages.<sup>22</sup>*

<sup>22</sup> Ecclesiasticus, xxxvi.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SEASONABLENESS OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER.

ANALYSIS. The Apostleship, a renouncement of self specially suited to our day—the present state of the world.

I. *Motives of hope.* The Church's twofold hope—[“Signs of the Times”]—no sudden intervention hoped—God's manner of acting. [Summary of present condition—hopes of the Sovereign Pontiffs] The world's impulse toward unity—past experience—God faithful.

II. *Motives of fear.* The future from the past—diminution of the Church's influence. Future of Europe without Christianity—the worship of matter. The world without religion—civilized barbarism—material without moral progress. The Church, the only salvation—offerings for her triumph.

III *Motives of fear changed to motives of hope by God's mercy—Conclusion.* The prophecy of Ezechiel—its two lessons of mercy. The condition, prayer—the calling of apostles.

## SEASONABLENESS OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER.

It should be understood by this time that we can run no risk in forgetting ourselves for God. With Him it is impossible that we should become poor through excess of generosity. For spiritual goods, as for those which are corporeal, there is a renouncement that has its hundredfold reward here below, while waiting for the infinite reward laid up in heaven. It is the renouncement which the Apostleship of Prayer puts us in a condition to practise, by recalling to us the great interests of God and the Church and of souls. In return for the prayers and sacrifices which it leads us to make, it secures to us, as we have seen, merits the most plentiful, satisfactions the most effective, and consolations the most comforting. And in the societies where it is established it becomes a principle of union and peace and prosperity, and for the Church a pledge of renewal and of triumph.

But these privileges of prayer inspired by zeal have nothing peculiar to the times in which we live. They are as everlasting and as changeless as the promises of the Saviour which are their foundation. We can say that they are an outcome of the nature

of things. For prayer is the divinest of all instruments and zeal the divinest of all movers; and so it is impossible that the human heart should bring into play this twofold force without itself being filled *unto all the fulness of God*.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, we might rest content with motives so powerful, without explaining further the special importance we attach to impressing on the Christians of our day the great duty of prayer. He who shows his fellow-men some precious mine, hitherto but little worked, would scarcely be condemned to justify himself for doing them this service. It is true also that considerations like these, which impel us to redoubled ardor, however encouraging they are of themselves, become a kind of reproach for our past negligence. But it is the reproach full of love which the Heart of Jesus for eighteen hundred years has made to all those who love Him. *I am come to cast fire on earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?*<sup>2</sup> So long as there is in the world a single people estranged from the knowledge and love of the Saviour, these words should put Christians to the blush. For they prove to them that they have not yet done all that is in their power to render effective the merciful desires of their God.

Thus it can never be beyond the purpose to urge this great duty on the children of the Church. But we may also say that care in doing this was never so

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians, iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke, xii. 49.

seasonable as in our own day. More than ever before there is a pressing need for us to make a great effort toward a generous co-operation with the desires of the Heart of Jesus. More than ever, too, we have reason to promise ourselves that such an effort will be crowned with the sublimest triumphs. We need only to look at the present state of the world, to be convinced of these two truths. On the one side, we shall understand that it was never easier for the Church to come into possession of the inheritance which her Divine Spouse has won for her by His death. On the other, we cannot hide it from ourselves that, if the whole world does not come into the fold of the Good Shepherd, it will fall a prey to the most appalling barbarism.

From this arise two kinds of motives, equally well suited to stir us to zeal for the Apostleship of Prayer. They are motives of hope and motives of fear.

## I.

## Motives of hope.

Two kinds of promises have been made to the Church of Jesus Christ. The first are for all time, and their fulfilment can be hindered by no power, human or infernal. These are the promises made her by her Divine Founder, that she shall never die. It is He Who said—*The gates of hell shall not prevail against her.*<sup>3</sup> The other promises are to be realized at a time more or less remote, and they depend upon the co-operation of men. They foretell to the Church the entire submission of all nations to her maternal rule, and the gathering together of all tribes and races toward the holy mountain whence she is to give them their laws.

It is the hopes based on these latter promises that we are now to consider. We fear not to declare that the Church never had greater reason to believe in their near fulfilment.

[In regard to what are called "Signs of the Times," and conjectures of the world's and Church's future to be drawn from them, the rule of the Prophet Jeremias, in the midst of his *Lamentations*, is practically the best. *The Lord is good to them that hope in Him. . . . It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthew, xvi. 18.

<sup>4</sup> iii. 25-6.

The circumstances of Father Ramière's life led him to watch with keen interest the gradual falling away from Christian principle of civilized nations and human society on the one hand, and the steady counter-progress of the Church's true life among individuals on the other ; and he followed eagerly the spread of the Catholic faith among heathen nations. Unlike some recent writers on these subjects, he speculated little and augured nothing in detail of things to come. He was content to study earnestly the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Saints and Doctors of the Church, with a careful examination of her past experience. To this he added a deep study of the various approved devotions which have come among Christians accredited by those private revelations that proceed from the gift of prophecy vouchsafed, when it pleases God's Providence, to certain holy souls. This is very different from gathering together prophecies, true or supposed, and then literally interpreting their meaning.

The devotions of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Conception especially drew the attention of Father Ramière, as giving signs of providential interposition ; and to these he added the ever-increasing devotion to St. Joseph. The result of his pious researches was first published in a considerable volume on the *Hopes of the Church*. This appeared shortly after the great event of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception, and drew forth a letter from Pius IX. It was edited by its author a second time after the appearance of the famous Syllabus, and it still remains one of the most learned and inspiring works on the supernatural life of the Church amidst the world.

The present work on the *Apostleship of Prayer*, as the reader has already seen, proposes Father Ramière's plan for the realization of the "hopes of the Church." At this place, he began a running review of the actual state of the world in regard to Christianity. This he intended chiefly to supply information concerning the great needs of the Church which were the inten-

tions specially proposed to the Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer, when he had succeeded in organizing it into "a League of Christian hearts united with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to obtain the salvation of the world and the triumph of the Church." At the time of its first publication, the definite organization of what has since become a universal league of prayer had not been completed; some one special need of the Church was not chosen out each month to be approved and blessed by the Sovereign Pontiff as a *General Intention* for the prayers of the Associates, nor was there yet an organized means of proposing these intentions, as there is now, through the many *Messengers of the Sacred Heart* in the different languages. At present, when the whole work has reached its mature and settled growth, this review is of less use; in fact, during the author's own lifetime, it was necessarily modified for each new edition of his book. It is well, however, to give here the final defined views of our author on those hopes which he looked to the Apostleship of Prayer to realize in large measure. They are taken from his preface to the last edition of his work—*Les Espérances de l'Eglise.*]

In the eyes of more than one reader, it will seem an ill-chosen time to give new publicity to writings which have for name and theme the "Hopes of the Church."

We must indeed acknowledge that all the events which have taken place for many years back would seem bitterly to give the lie to any such hopes.

The present period of the earthly existence of the Church recalls that darkest hour of our Saviour's mortal life, when His most faithful friends suffered themselves to be overcome by discouragement. They had seen Him making His triumphal entry into



Jerusalem, surrounded by the people crying Hosanna and followed by the very foreigners, who were drawn to Him as by a resistless charm ; and they doubted not the time had come when He would once again set up the kingdom in Israel. But soon the illusion faded. It was not alone the indifferent who dropped away ; His very admirers were turned into enemies. After the Hosanna was heard—"Crucify Him!" He Who had just been acclaimed as the King of Israel was now forsaken of all, and given over defenceless to His tormentors ; cruelly scourged and nailed to the Cross, He died between two thieves.

In the space of a few years, we too have seen the existence of the Church passing through a like phase.

Some Catholics may have expected a sudden intervention of the Immaculate Virgin and persuaded themselves that the enemies of the Church, overthrown in a moment like St. Paul on his way to Damascus, would be transformed into faithful servants. We have never cherished such a hope. In the writings which we are now republishing, we declared this to be the result of a study of the ways followed by Providence in the past. All leads us to believe that, before God brings about the triumph of his Church, He will wait until His enemies have put forth the utmost power of their rage against her, and even until they seem to have utterly triumphed over her.

It was thus that Jesus Christ, Whose mortal life is the type of the earthly existence of the Church, conquered death by letting Himself be conquered by it; and He attained to the full success of His mission when He gave Himself up into the hands of His executioners.

Thus too the Church triumphed over the cruelty of the Roman emperors, the subtlety of heresies, the barbarism of the peoples of the North, the tyranny of Christian kings and emperors, and over all the enemies with whom she has had to struggle during the toilsome course of her existence. Her triumph came, not from disarming them before the strife, but only after she had undergone the uttermost excesses of their hostility and rage.

God always holds the same manner of acting, of which we have so striking a picture in the great vision of the Prophet Ezechiel. Before He again breathes forth the spirit of life, God waits until death has done its work. *Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live? And I said, O Lord God, Thou knowest. And He said to me: Prophecy concerning these bones, and say to them—Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you and you shall live! . . . And you shall know that I am the Lord. For God, says St. Paul, hath concluded all in unbelief, that He may have mercy on all.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ezechiel, xxxvii; Romans, xi. 32.

[Even a brief summary of the condition of the Catholic Church in the world at the close of the nineteenth century, would have to bring out the following points :

I. Unfavorably: the laws restraining the action of the clergy and dispersing the teaching religious orders, and the attempt to secularize education, thus making sure that the child's mind and heart shall be occupied for the most part with merely natural objects; the developing of this system of Naturalism, with constant attacks on the Church, by leading writers on the natural sciences and history, and the use of the public press in spreading it among all classes of society; the systematic organization of irreligion, thus brought into vogue, in the sect of Freemasonry, serving as a centre to those secret societies which gather together the proud and sensual children of the Church in Catholic nations and the indifferent or infidel populations of Protestant countries; the victory won over supernatural religion by the overthrow of the Pope's temporal power—a prelude in the eyes of the enemies of the Church to the final triumph of irreligion over Christianity.

II. Favorably: among the *individual* members of the Church, the greater frequentation of the Sacraments and the progress of essentially supernatural devotions, like that of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Conception, calculated to root habits of faith in the Christian conscience; also, the enlightening of careless minds by the openly hostile manifestations of the irreligious spirit;

In the Church as a *society*, the spread of spiritual works, like the Apostleship of Prayer—of works of missionary zeal, like the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood—of works of mercy closely united with supernatural practices, like the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul; also, the slow but steady recovery of the Church's activity in nations that have struck the severest blows at her, as in Germany after the "Culturkampf," and in Spanish America after many generations of constant revolution; the continuous growth and increasing efficiency of the

foreign missions, the renewed relations with the Oriental Churches, and the activity of the Church in international movements, as for the condition of the workingmen and abolition of the slave-trade; the new life given to the training of the clergy, to solid learning and public piety, by the dispositions of the Sovereign Pontiffs; especially, the triumph of truth over error by the dogmatic definitions of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility in the face of all opposition, and the responsive movements of the Catholic people as shown in spontaneous pilgrimages to Lourdes and Paray le-Monial and other shrines of the Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart, and to Rome itself, including all classes of society from all parts of the world.

From these favorable "Signs of the Times," the Sovereign Pontiffs have gathered hope for the future during the late years of storm and trial. Thus Pius IX. in 1854, in the Bull *Ineffabilis* defining the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, gave utterance to these words: "With sure hope and all confidence we wait for this Most Blessed Virgin to bring it to pass that our Holy Mother the Church may flourish throughout all nations, that all hindrances may be taken from her path and every error be overthrown; and that all the erring may return to the way of truth, and there may be one fold and one shepherd." Leo XIII., in different Encyclical Letters on the Rosary, the Third Order of St. Francis, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and elsewhere, has repeatedly put before the faithful the same supernatural grounds of hope while insisting on the grave dangers from a natural point of view. Thus in his address to the Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer, on the 23d of November, 1879, he spoke as follows: "Our confidence is further increased when we reflect that the manifestation of this devotion to the Sacred Heart is a new and gracious pledge of the charity of Jesus Christ Who has wished thereby to call back to Himself the world which has gone astray, that it may make its peace with God and enjoy the plentiful fruits of redemption." Ten years later, when raising

the feast of the Sacred Heart to a higher rank in the universal Church, he promises that "the faithful shall find in this truly salutary devotion a refuge and a defence against the ever-increasing onslaughts of impiety." And, in the same year (15 August, 1889), urging once more on the Christian people the practice of the Rosary and devotion to St. Joseph, he concludes confidently: "For, sooner or later, pious prayers and hope in God's goodness will bear their fruit."

It is of such hopes, and their warrant in the present condition of the Church and the world, that Father Ramière goes on to speak.]

It is very true, therefore, that in the Church of our day a work of life is going on—a travail, so to speak, that is making itself felt at every point of the globe.

This work corresponds with a similar movement that is going on in human society, and which furnishes us with an equally solid motive of good augury for the future. I speak of that resistless impulse which is leading all the peoples of the world to come together and unite with each other.

For it is impossible to doubt that all social currents are impelling the human race toward unity. Unity is the aspiration, the want and the necessity of our age. Even the exaggeration of this tendency and the crimes to which it serves as a pretext prove how deep it is. It says that our age experiences an urgent need of the truth and the Church; for there is no real unity possible but in the Church and through the truth. In the Church alone is unity of

doctrine, because in her alone is there a teaching authority. Without her pale there are but opinions, and consequently dissensions and strife. In the Church alone is there unity of interests. For she alone shows to men, above those earthly interests which of their nature are opposed to each other, an eternal interest common to all, which they can secure only by the sacrifice of their selfishness. In the Church alone is found the unity of the great human family. For she alone, by her teaching of a common origin, upholds the doctrine of a common destiny. She alone teaches men to consider each other in Jesus Christ as true brethren and the adoptive sons of the Heavenly Father. Thus, between human society which desires unity at any price and the Church which alone can realize such unity, there can be no serious dissension. At most, there can be misunderstanding. If this misunderstanding can cease, if society can come to know at last what the Church wishes and what it wishes itself, the reconciliation cannot fail of being wrought.

If we look into history we shall see that in every period wherein nations were drawn near to each other, in all foundations of great empires, God put forth His miraculous efforts to crown this merely outward unity by a unity that is within and far more salutary—the unity of truth. Nabuchodonosor, Cyrus, and Alexander were the predestined heads of three monarchies that, one after the other, held pos-

session of the empire of the world ; and they received light from heaven that would have been enough for them to convert the world, had they been entirely faithful. The Incarnation of the Word—the great effort toward uniting together all the children of God—coincides in time with the vast unity brought about by the arms of Rome. Since that time, the ages which are the most remarkable by their tendencies to draw nations nearer to each other—the fourth, the thirteenth, and the sixteenth centuries—have been likewise remarkable for the virtue, the power of speech, and the miracles of Saints whom God raised up in His Church. Who can doubt that at this present time, when the unity of all peoples is becoming incalculably closer than ever before, when society more than ever stands in need of the Church and of her Saints, God will grant us His assistance ? It should seem that He would be wanting to Himself if, when He has promised to give all nations as an inheritance to His Son, He had no care for the great opportunity now before Him of bringing that Son into possession of the inheritance so long squandered. No, it is not God Who will tarry. Only let us do our duty—let us pray and sigh and labor, and we shall see the redemption of Israel and the salvation of the world.

## II.

## Motives of fear.

Yet, after all, hope must not blind us to the real dangers which society is running at the present time. We have solid motives for reckoning much on the help of God's mercy. But we have reasons quite as serious for strong fears of the avenging justice of God.

Perhaps the East was not guiltier than Europe is to-day, when it was given over to the darkness of schism and delivered a prey to the avenging sword of Mahomet. Africa had its Augustine and its Fulgentius, its virgins and martyrs, in a word, Saints more numerous than our own perhaps, when all its flourishing churches were broken in upon and devastated by the flood of barbarians. How can we assure ourselves that a similar fate is not in store for us, if we push our obstinacy yet further and do not put a speedy end to a revolt now counting its three centuries of existence? What reason have we not for fearing that society may sink lower and lower in its blindness, so long as the most appalling calamities do not draw it from the abyss in spite of itself? The outcome of our latest trials has been, alas! too incomplete, not to give us reason to think that, for working a serious renewal in a body already gangrened with covetousness and sensuality, there would be needed nothing less than a deluge of blood.



We are not then to shut our eyes to these motives of fear. On the contrary, let us have the courage to look them coolly in the face. A calm and reasoned view of our dangers will stir up zeal and strengthen resolution to co-operate with all our power in the action of God's mercy, seeking to save us.

To appreciate fully the dangers of the present situation of society, we will ask ourselves two questions.

*1. What have we to fear for Europe [and for all civilized countries], if it does not accept the spiritual rule of the Church?*<sup>6</sup>

Countries mainly Protestant make up more than one third of Europe. Besides this, a large number of the educated classes in Catholic countries, as is well known, profess toward the Church, which is their Mother by their baptism, the most unjust prejudices and a distrust full of hatred. This state of things, it is also well known, is owing to an impious press and an irreligious education. Now, so long as it exists, the Church, instead of gaining, can but lose ground day by day. For all influence travels from above downward, and the lower classes unavoidably fashion themselves on those superior to them. It is very important, therefore, to foresee the outcome of

<sup>6</sup> [In questions of this kind America, on account of the origin of its civilization, is to be considered a part of the "Greater Europe."]

this progressive diminution of the influence of the Church.

What will become of Europe, if it does not return to the Catholic Church?

Surely it will not become Protestant. What the most illustrious of French Protestant writers has said of his own country,<sup>7</sup> is equally certain of every country over which the breath of rationalism has passed. Once men have gone so far as to deny all mysteries, they will not retrace their steps to make an arbitrary choice between the mystery of the Trinity and that of transubstantiation. Either they will bend, in full and serious submission, to the yoke of the faith, when they are tired of the burdensome agitation of doubt; or else they will turn away from the faith and keep their full independence. But they will not be inconsistent with themselves by taking for their rule of faith a book that lends itself to differing interpretations and delivers from no uncertainty. Without any doubt, if what is now Catholic in Europe should lose the faith and if what has already lost the faith through the influence of rationalism should not again become Catholic, all Europe would soon cease to be Christian.

What religion then would be held? A thousand voices are uplifted to say that the Christian religion is the last of religions, that after Christianity no teaching remains for man save philosophy and doubt.

<sup>7</sup> Guizot.

But philosophy can never be the religion of any great number. It is too uncertain in its principles, too subtle in its deductions, too divided in its conclusions. Its catechism is too misty to be the catechism of the common people. Its high priests have received their mission only from their talents or their presumption, and they lack that divine radiance with which men have always wished to see the brows of their priests encircled. So philosophy, even if it should succeed in setting itself up as a religion, would never be more than the religion of a small number, and even this small number would never form a Church, for each of them would depend on his own reason alone.

What then is to become of Europe if it does not return to the Catholic Church? Unhappily we are not reduced to simple guess-work in the matter. Facts give an answer to the question only too loudly. It will become what those peoples became which, after they had overthrown the foundation offered them by faith, would fain have rested the edifice of their prosperity on interest alone. They will lose what still remains of the Christian spirit. They will cast aside as superannuated superstitions every belief in God and in the future life, and they will consecrate themselves entirely to the worship of material enjoyments. In the coming generations, already so softly bred, noble instincts will be more and more stifled by the excessive development of selfish instincts

and sensual appetites. The strong virtues will become more and more rare. For yet a little time, perhaps, the universal tendency to comfort and well-being will keep in vogue a certain softness of manners, and will shield the people from the disturbances of violence. But the thirst of enjoyment will burn more and more strongly, whereas the means to satisfy it will be far from increasing in the same proportion. Industrial development will unavoidably bring along with itself the concentration of riches and the spread of wretchedness. The love of a God born in poverty will no longer hold in check the selfishness of the rich, and the hope of heaven will no longer be here to comfort the hearts of the poor and to stay their arm. Who can foresee the hatred and strife, the terrible revolutions, that will result from such a state of things, and who will find a remedy for such ills outside of religion?

So much for Europe. Let us now look out upon the whole world.

*What will become of the world, if Europe loses all religion?*

The world is destined, in every supposition, to undergo the influence of European civilization and to fashion itself on the same plan. With our civilization we may bear to the unbelieving and savage nations of the world a belief that is certain, simple, sublime, able to inspire and make easy every virtue;

and then we shall regenerate the world. For in the utter dearth of beliefs in which the world is found, such teaching is demanded by its utmost need. But with our industries we may bear to barbarous nations our doubts and our infidel reasonings; and then they will take from our civilization only its dangers and not its advantages. We shall make all true progress impossible for them, and we shall condemn them to the worst of all barbarism—the barbarism that is civilized.

Among Christian nations every human feeling, the passions, the very vices, reach up toward the height to which faith has uplifted souls, just as the falsest systems reflect back the truths which they strive to combat. But it will not be so with the peoples which we shall draw from their present ignorance only to share with them our own errors. Whatever is great in our ideas will remain forever sealed to them; but in return they will learn from us that refinement of crime which in their simplicity they knew not. That last remaining check which was imposed by their superstition on their passions, will fail before the influence of our scepticism. Nothing will come to take its place, and from this union of decrepit barbarism with a bastard civilization we shall see a birth of wickedness so monstrous and ferocity so prodigious that no century of the world's history has furnished an example of its like.

Once again, all this is not mere guess-work. We

are only setting down what has happened whenever European influence has been brought to bear on savage and barbarous peoples, without calling in the aid of religion. This result can only become more general still in the measure that the points of contact between our civilization and barbarism become multiplied, unless religion is there to sanctify them.

We have every right, therefore, to conclude that, if the world does not soon become Christian, it can scarcely fail of falling into a worse state than that in which it was at the coming of our Saviour. Such a state could be compared only to that civilization, refined but incurably corrupt, which seems to have preceded the deluge, when *all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth*, and *it repented God that He had made man on the earth*.<sup>8</sup>

And this, almost without fail, would be the consequence of that violent movement which is impelling nations along the way of industrial undertakings, if the material progress were not accompanied by moral progress. This would be the goal of that well-defined tendency which is drawing the whole world toward a unity hitherto without example, should those who have the happiness of knowing the truth—instead of securing for truth the benefit of this tendency—allow their enemies to make use of it in leading the world to the fearful unity of doubt and error.

Thus it is well proved that only the triumph

<sup>8</sup>Genesis, vi. 6, 12.

of the Church—the complete re-establishing of its benign influence over souls—can save Europe, and with Europe the entire world, from a barbarism so much the more to be feared as it will have at its disposition the most irresistible material forces. For the scepticism which invades every quarter, for the cupidity whose fires burn stronger and stronger, for the hatred which divides the classes of society, for the opposition which is becoming ever more irreconcilable between the extremes of wealth and wretchedness, for the dishonorable and insatiable selfishness of men, only the Church can furnish an effective remedy—in her divine faith, her undying hopes, and her exhaustless charity. Once more, this is the alternative opened before us. On the one side is life, the most abundant and prosperous and divine the earth has ever seen. On the other is death—death the most cruel and shameful, and which will be preceded by the anguish and heart-rendings of a frightful agony.

Which of these two sides will society choose? God alone knows; but we can at least give our help that the choice may fall on the side of life. Of course, in this supreme crisis, a great part must fall to those whom God has so highly honored by communicating to them a share of His authority over His reasonable creatures. If the masters of the earth could but understand it, if all those who wield the twofold power of the sceptre and the pen, would

appreciate the responsibility weighing upon them—if, instead of consulting so often their selfish interests or their own wisdom, they would seek counsel from the thoughts of God and strive to follow the impulse given by Providence, the great Mover of human societies—how resistless would be their power, how pure and lasting their glory. *And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth.*<sup>9</sup> It does not belong to us to make our voice heard by those whom God has lifted up so high. But we should offer sacrifices and shed tears and—were it needed—our blood, to obtain for them the graces necessary to the fulfilling of their high mission. The Saints acted after this manner in circumstances less critical. At so solemn a moment, when it should seem that the destiny of the world was to be decided, can it be possible there will not be found many devoted souls, in the cloister and in the world, who will offer themselves as pure victims for the triumph of the Church, the regeneration of society, and the salvation of the world?

<sup>9</sup> Psalm ii. 10.



## III.

Motives of fear changed to motives of hope by God's mercy—  
Conclusion of the Second Part.

There is a prophecy of Ezechiel which seems written for the times in which we live.<sup>10</sup> In a single picture he sets before our eyes the sad consequences of our wanderings and the touching figure of God's mercies. We should strive to understand it, that we may grasp the secret of that wondrous transformation by which He changes our weightiest motives of fear into hope.

How comforting is the teaching we receive from this mysterious picture, and what light it throws upon the past history of mankind, and its present condition !

*The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones :*

*And He led me about through them on every side : now they were very many upon the face of the plain, and they were exceeding dry.*

*And He said to me : Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live ? And I said : O Lord God, Thou knowest.*

*And He said to me : Prophecy concerning these bones : and say to them : Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.*

<sup>10</sup> xxxvii. 1-14.

*Thus saith the Lord God to these bones : Behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live.*

*And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin : and I will give you spirit, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord. '*

*And I prophesied as He had commanded me : and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a commotion : and the bones came together, each one to its joint.*

*And I saw, and behold the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin was stretched out over them, but there was no spirit in them.*

*And He said to me : Prophecy to the spirit, prophecy, O son of man, and say to the spirit : Thus saith the Lord God : Come, spirit from the four winds, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again.*

*And I prophesied as He had commanded me : and the spirit came into them, and they lived : and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.*

*And He said to me : Son of man, all these bones are the house of Israel : They say : Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost, and we are cut off.*

*Therefore prophecy, and say to them : Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchres, O My people : and will bring you into the land of Israel.*

*And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchres, and shall have brought you out of your graves, O My people :*

*And shall have put My spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall make you rest upon your own land : and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and done it, saith the Lord God.*

First of all, it gives us to understand that the moral life of man must come to him from heaven. It is not enough that earth should give him sinews and flesh, and that the organs wherein his strength resides should be covered over by a smooth and fair-hued skin. The child of God must have a divine life, the life of the spirit—grace. Without it, material civilization, with all the mechanical arts which are its strength and the liberal arts which give it splendor and brilliancy, can never make aught else than beautiful corpses ; it will not bring forth societies that truly live.

Secondly, the Prophet reminds us that God *made the nations of the earth for health*, and they may be healed even when they seem to have lost the very breath of life.<sup>11</sup> Here below, God's justice never acts alone. Mercy is its constant companion, even in its most appalling vengeance, and mercy holds itself ready to heal the wounds inflicted by the chastisement. Oftenest even, it is mercy that both holds the sword and strikes, in order to heal. Under its hand chastisements are changed to remedies ; and mercy casts the nations into the tomb only as the husbandman throws the grain of wheat into the earth, that it may

<sup>11</sup> Wisdom, i. 14.

find there, in the midst of seeming decay, new energy.

Yes, human societies in themselves are like physical nature. Alike in the two orders, God's goodness causes life to start up from the bosom of death, and He makes the fruitfulness of springtime follow on the barrenness of winter. When human societies are brought to bay and can hope nothing further from themselves, then God is pleased to come to their help. He makes the corpses to come forth from their tombs, raising up the driest bones. He makes the light of His truth to shine on those souls which have lost all—even the illusion of their errors. He renews to justice and strength and peace the people that lay inert in the corruption of every vice. It is thus He loves to make known His power, and to show that He is always the Lord, the Creator, Jehovah, the Principle of being and of life.

But there is a condition to be fulfilled before these great miracles can be performed, before the Spirit may come from heaven and *renew the face of the earth*, before grace will come back to the souls which have lost it, before the peoples can be born again to life. It is necessary that this Spirit of God shall be called down by the voice of man. No doubt it is God Who sends It, but He makes use of the ministry of the sons of men. He seems to have denied Himself the power of working such wonders alone. And so, when He would raise up a society,

He begins by sending to it *men of desires* that call upon His Spirit with all the ardor of their zeal and sigh from their inmost heart for the salvation of their people. *In that day*, the Lord hath said, *I will pour out upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers.* These prayers shall rise up to heaven like great clouds that shall shower down the plenteous dew of grace. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner and of the unclean woman*—for purity and salvation.<sup>12</sup>

How beautiful is the calling of these forerunners of their age. They are for their own age what the Patriarchs were for the entire universe. What power is in these arrows of prayer which pierce the heavens and reach even to the Heart of God! What merit is there in these sacrifices offered for the salvation of the world, whose virtue adds to the sacrifice of the Divine Redeemer a fruitfulness it would not have without them! This mission which is so glorious is set before every Christian. To you who read this book it is proposed in a manner altogether special. Listen to the Heart of your God crying from the depths of His tabernacle, with the whole strength of His boundless love. *Whom shall I send, and who will come forth for us?* It is for you to answer with the Prophet: *Lo, here am I, Lord; send me.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Psalm ciii. 30; Daniel, ix. 23; Zacharias, xii. 10, xiii. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Isaias, vi. 8.

## APPENDIX I.

### *On the organization of the Apostleship of Prayer.*

[The third part of Father Ramière's work, as already explained, concerned the practice of the Apostleship of Prayer; and this is equivalently contained in the authorized *Handbook*, modified according to the later dispositions and published under the supervision of the Rev. Director General, at the offices of the various *Messengers of the Sacred Heart*. The earnest words which we add here as an Appendix, were written by Father Ramière shortly after the final approval of the Statutes, in 1879.]

Grace, like nature, goes forward with order in its creations. It causes its works to pass through different periods, each of which has its own special end—different seasons, each with its own fruitfulness. The plant brings forth its flowers in the springtime and its fruit in autumn. The human body unfolds itself in the time of growth, but comes to its strength and ripe proportions only in youth and the fullness of manly age. So too, in the creations of the moral order, there are various seasons and divers ages. First they must grow and reach out; but afterward they must organize themselves and become strong. If this second period should not follow on the first, a work which may have been most flourishing in its beginnings will soon come to languish. It will be like those plants which in the time of spring put forth a wondrous growth, and yet endure not the first cold blasts of winter.

Is this to be the fate of the Apostleship of Prayer? After spreading in a few years to the ends of the world, shall this work be doomed to disappear soon? Whether of the two parables of the Gospel is to be realized in its case? That of *the house built upon the sand, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and they beat upon that house, and it fell?* Or that of *the house built upon a rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock?*<sup>1</sup>

There are two ways of understanding this question. We may ask ourselves if the Apostleship of Prayer has in itself sufficient elements of solidity and durability, or whether an active enough use will be made of these elements, to allow of the work's withstanding those causes of destruction which threaten every human creation.

It will be easy for us to answer the first of these questions. As to the second, we put it to our Associates, most of all to our Promoters and Directors. To them, quite as much as—even more than—to us, belongs the answer.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, vii. 24-7.

## I.

1. Yes, surely, the Apostleship of Prayer has in itself all the elements of strength and duration; they are the elements which Jesus Christ has implanted in the devotion to His Divine Heart. Our work, indeed, has never claimed for itself any other merit than that of bringing into light the true spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and of making its practice easy. To its close union with this blessed devotion it acknowledges that all its past success has been due, and on this it founds its hopes for the future. Just so long as the words of the Apostle hold true, and in the Eucharistic tabernacle our Heavenly Mediator shall *live to make intercession for us*<sup>2</sup>—just so long as He shall there continue, by His apostleship of supplication and mystic sacrifice, the work which long ago He fulfilled by His apostleship of word and action and suffering—so long will true devotedness lead the friends of this Divine Saviour to make their own all His interests and His desires, and along with Him to pray and offer themselves in sacrifice. Such a duty imposes itself on every truly Christian heart, it has been put in practice in every age by generous souls, and it needs only to be brought to mind to be accepted by all.

The devotion to the Heart of Jesus has for its object, not alone the visible representations of this Heart, nor simply the material Heart of the Saviour,

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews, vii. 25.



but His Heart living and loving and experiencing in our behalf feelings and desires and repulsions. It is clear that the practice of the devotion must also not limit itself to a few exterior signs of homage, but it must lead us to enter into the feelings of the Heart of Jesus, to share in Its sympathies and antipathies, and to give our help to the triumph of Its interests by the means always in our power—the union of our prayers with Its prayers.

This is the chief root of our work, and the prime warrant of its vitality—its essential connection with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

2. It finds another and an equally sure warrant in the promises made by God our Saviour to prayer, and in the conditions of the power of prayer.

He that lieth not has bound Himself by oath to refuse us nothing which we may demand of Him in His name, especially if we ask it, not by ourselves alone, but many uniting together to put up the same petition. He has thus Himself pointed out two conditions that assure the power and efficiency of our prayers. They must be made in union with Himself, and by several Christians united together. Does not this already give us the idea of an association that would unite together a number of Christians to pray in union with Jesus Christ, and to entreat from God's goodness the graces which we know to be conformable to our Saviour's desires? Is not this accordingly the tracing out of the plan of the Apostleship of

Prayer? Truly, our work is not different from this—an association whose members unite together to ask of God, in union with the Heart of Jesus, not that which is of use to each of themselves, but that which is most according to the desires of the Divine Heart. Manifestly, it would be impossible to realize more fully the words of our Divine Master. For praying in our Saviour's name is not a mere calling upon His name with the lips. It means to enter into the thoughts of the Saviour, and thus to direct our prayers to the work of the salvation of souls. Most assuredly, Christians did not wait for the creation of the Apostleship of Prayer before giving answer to the call implied in our Lord's words. A special association was not necessary to make it possible for us to gain the priceless advantages promised in the call. Yet an association could not but be of the very greatest use in making it easy for us to practise such an Apostleship. Just so long as prayer is the chief means of gaining grace and union with Jesus Christ is the essential condition of the power of our prayers, these two dogmas of our faith will furnish a solid foundation to the work which has for its special end to make known to Christians the Heart of Jesus pleading unceasingly along with them and urging them to pray without ceasing along with Him.

3. The permanent needs and interests of the Church are a third warrant of duration for our work.

These interests are of two kinds: the sanctifica-

tion of the souls already belonging to the body of the Church, and the conversion of those who are still strangers to her. Now, to secure this twofold interest of hers, the Church has but a single source of strength—grace—and a single labor—the apostleship. To spread grace among souls that are guilty in order to make them just, and among just souls to make them increase in justice—this is the twofold aim which the Church never ceases to pursue through her apostles. But before grace can be spread abroad among souls, it must be obtained from God; and the abundance with which its life-giving waters come down from heaven will, of necessity, be the measure of the fulness with which they are to be poured out on earth. For the Church, therefore, it is of the highest moment that the exercise of the interior apostleship, which aims at obtaining grace, should accompany the exterior apostleship which aims at spreading it abroad. This second ministry is the privilege of a small number; but the first is open to all. It is the duty of all, a duty of the first order—*first of all*, says St. Paul<sup>3</sup>—who seems to make dependent on its fulfilment the realization of the Almighty's design of bringing all men to be saved. But this duty, unhappily, is unknown, or at least forgotten, by the greater number; and so it is of the very greatest use that a special work should come to recall it unceasingly to all, and to make its fulfilment easy.

<sup>3</sup> I. Timothy, ii. 4.

For we cannot doubt it—if all Christians prayed as they ought for the salvation of souls, the abundance of graces which this world-wide effort of prayer would bring down would renew the face of the earth. Hence it follows that so long as there are hearts devoted to the Church and zealous for the salvation of souls, the Apostleship of Prayer will find in them active promoters.

4. Last of all, the prime warrant of stability for our work is given us by the infinite power and never-ceasing activity of the Heart of Jesus.

For without ceasing is the labor of this Divine Heart. By the Spirit of God, the fulness of Which it has and Which from It is poured forth on all just souls, It exercises over such souls a constant influence. Along what lines does It act? Whitherward does It impel souls? Toward the three things which make up the essence of our work—toward prayer and zeal and union. Toward prayer—for, praying unceasingly for us, Jesus stirs us to pray always with Him, at least by our intention: *We ought always to pray, and not to faint.*<sup>4</sup> Toward zeal—for He will not have us bound our cares to our own interests alone; but He desires that, as true children of God, we should take to heart the interests of our Heavenly Father, the hallowing of His name, the coming of His kingdom, the doing of His will on earth as in heaven. And last, toward union—for

<sup>4</sup>St. Luke, xviii. 1.

this was the last wish He uttered in our behalf to God His Father, on the eve of His death, and He ceases not still to offer it to Him: *That they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.*<sup>5</sup> This is beyond all doubt: until the end of ages the Heart of Jesus will impel, with all the might It has, souls docile to Its action to unite with each other by a perfect blending of their own interests and feelings and desires and prayers, with His prayers, desires, feelings, interests; and since the Apostleship of Prayer has for its sole aim to bring about this union, we may be assured that the first Promoter and chief Propagator of our work shall be, until the end of ages, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Itself.

This is the true explanation—the only valid explanation—of the rapid spread of this work and the spontaneous springing up of other works born of the same thought. On every side associations of prayers in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus have been established—local unions for a city or a diocese, a national league for France, associations of prayers for Russia, England, Africa. All these works spring from the same root, all are designed to realize the desires of the Heart of Jesus, and consequently all are sure of His help. For ourselves, we have always made it our duty to encourage and help on and spread them all; and we have willingly seen them borrow

<sup>5</sup> St. John, xvii. 21.

our own formulas and ways of proceeding.\* In their case, the Divine Heart of Jesus accepts the aid given to the realizing of some few of Its desires. How much the more pleasing ought it not be to Him that we should take up in one all His divine interests, without reserve of any? These other works bring together certain members of His mystical body to help certain needs of this body, and they can count on the support of its Divine Head. How much the more sure of such support is that work which tends to make all the members work together for the increase of the whole body? These particular unions realize this aim in part. But how much the more perfectly is it not realized by a universal union which embraces all the faithful in its ranks, and all the desires of Jesus Christ in its end and aim. And, in truth, what Jesus Christ asked for His servants was not different unions, but one only union that should reach out to all and receive all into itself:—*that they may be one in Us*.<sup>6</sup>

\* [It is well to remark here, against an unfortunate confusion of quite different works, that the Apostleship of Prayer has never united itself with any particular union or confraternity, nor could it do so without violating the canon law that governs similar associations in the Church and invalidating the Indulgences granted. Members of any pious society or community can be received in the Apostleship, either as simple Associates or Promoters, but they must be received singly, and the Apostleship has no approved or organized existence in the Church except as the one League of the Sacred Heart ]

<sup>6</sup> St. John, xvii. 21.

## II.

Yes, we are sure of the all-powerful support of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, if we labor at thus uniting Christian hearts together by the blending of their interests with His own. And how could He refuse to help on, with all His power, those who seek only to realize His desires? Can His power be used for aught else than the realizing of His own designs? He would be in contradiction with Himself, did He not co-operate with those whom He Himself calls to work along with Him!

The co-operation of the Heart of Jesus is thus certainly ours. But can He count in like manner on our co-operation with Him? The work of the Apostleship of Prayer is clearly according to His own desires, and it answers well to the needs of the Church besides giving an unfailing power to our own prayers. But shall it find, in every part of Christendom, active and zealous Promoters to keep alive the good it has already done and to put it in a condition to do yet more?

The light of experience has now rendered it easy for us to point out the conditions to be fulfilled if our work is to bear everywhere the blessed fruits which it has already brought forth in some places.

1. It is necessary, first of all, that God should inspire some person of influence with favorable dis-

positions toward the work and with the desire of working to spread it.

These dispositions will not always be found in the quarters where assistance was hoped for. With some persons, who are otherwise prudent and zealous, the exceeding multiplicity of new works is a peremptory motive for rejecting this along with all others, without even making inquiry if it has any special claim on their good-will. It will also happen, more than once, that some will condemn this work on false appearances, without seeking after accurate ideas concerning it in the authorized publications which lay down its doctrinal basis. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has had too much experience of such opposition to make it a matter of astonishment or complaint, when we see that our own work is marked with the same seal.

But the Heart of Jesus will not fail to join consolations to the trials, of which He will not deprive works that are dear to Him. Often, from the most unexpected quarter, He will raise up devoted helpers. Sometimes this will come from the stirring of His interior impulses; at other times, souls lowly and powerless of themselves will obtain by their earnest entreaties and pious importunity the assistance of powerful patrons. They will not suffer themselves to be driven back by a first refusal; they offer the book of the Apostleship of Prayer and they gain a reading for it. Usually nothing more is nec-



essary. The moment that its main idea has fastened on the attention, the mind is taken by its simplicity and greatness. Thus in every country of the world, pious prelates, influential priests, religious of every order, and zealous missionaries have come forward of their own accord to spread the work around them.

2. Their success has been all the easier as they have lost no time in finding among the simple faithful devoted and working Promoters.

This is the second condition of growth for the Apostleship of Prayer; and this condition, happily, it is not difficult to fulfil. Wherever the Heart of Jesus is known and loved, souls are found who will not be content with honoring Him for their own sake, but aspire to the honor of spreading the worship of the Sacred Heart. Fire always spreads; but, more than any other flame, that which consumes the Sacred Heart tends to spread itself abroad, and every soul that is enkindled with its heat feels the need of sharing it with others. As soon as we truly love this Divine Heart, we desire to find friends for It; and, since the Apostleship of Prayer has this for its sole aim, we are only too happy to make use of the easy means it furnishes for this purpose and to devote ourselves to spreading its work.

Nothing more is needed for the organization of the work and for assuring its stability. A certain number of Promoters, men or women, gather round a zealous priest, all stirred with the high ambition of

glorifying the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of helping to realize Its desires. At least once each month they meet together to agree on the means they are to take, the dangers they must avoid, the useful works they are to help on. It is impossible that the Sacred Heart should find such instruments so ready for Its work, and should not make use of them in carrying out the designs of His love.

We have spoken of men among the Promoters, as well as women. It would be, indeed, a mistake to imagine that this association is only for the weaker sex. The Heart of Jesus—the tenderest of hearts—is also the strongest; and the devotion of which It is the object is a manly devotion. When it takes the form of devotedness—and this is the peculiar character of the Apostleship of Prayer—this devotion becomes yet more fitted to the needs and tendencies of pious Christian men. Who is the man, truly pierced through by the love of Jesus Christ, who could believe himself dispensed, because he is a man, from entering into a League formed for the defence of the interests of this Divine Saviour and for the realization of His desires?

Thus the Apostleship of Prayer will be perfectly organized and will bring forth all its fruits, only where there is the harmonious action of Councils of Promoters, men and women, in which the men and women rival each other's earnest devotedness in carrying out the Sacred Heart's designs of constant

mercy to all the souls redeemed by His precious blood.

3. The most earnest desire of this Heart so loving is to be loved. So the first duty of the Promoters, men or women, is to gain to the Sacred Heart many friends. They apply themselves therefore to increasing the number of those who honor the Sacred Heart, not only by exterior practices, but by sincere devotedness to Its interests. For this purpose the Apostleship of Prayer offers them its *Three Degrees*.

To induce the greatest possible number of Christians to make the interests of the Sacred Heart their own, at least by the daily *Morning Offering* [First Degree], is already something. This simple practice may even have a very considerable result, for all theologians teach that it can be sufficient to give to all the works of the day, and consequently to the entire life of those who practise it daily, the excellent merit of charity and the apostolic power of zeal.

Yet it is to be feared that its very easiness lays it open to the danger of being forgotten. So the Promoters—men or women—will do their best to persuade their Associates to unite with this daily Offering the recitation of the *Decade of the Beads* [Second Degree]. Besides its intrinsic merit, this practice has a triple value. It secures for us, before the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the all-powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It frees us,

by its monthly renewal of our intention, from the danger of routine. Last of all is the still more priceless advantage to be derived from the organization into Bands of fifteen and the monthly distribution of the Tickets, which keep up the life of the work by establishing constant communication among its members.

The same results, in yet larger measure, will be obtained if, over and above the simple decade of the Beads, there is adopted as a means of organization the *Communion of Reparation*, either weekly or monthly [Third Degree]. Among all the practices of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, there is surely none that better realizes devotedness to the interests of this Divine Heart, and none consequently that should be dearer to the Promoters and Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer.

This, therefore, is the question which we now put to the devoted Christians, the zealous priests, the religious and the missionaries who until this day have given so generous a co-operation to the Heart of Jesus. Do they find in what they have done for Him a reason for repose, or do they not rather see a motive for laboring with renewed earnestness? The exceeding great reward which He has in store for them because of past services ought to stir their ambition and move them to merit a yet greater recompense. They have won over to Him many friends; but how much greater still is the number

of hearts that love Him not? He has the right to win their love; and, if it is in our power to gain some of these hearts to Him, can we refuse it? Since the day when we entered His service, He has showered ever new blessings on us, and they make Him worthy of all our thanks. Then too the Church is attacked by new dangers that make our Apostleship more than ever necessary. Is there not more than one soul whose loss we might have hindered by more fervent prayers? How many, at this very moment, are leaping into the abyss of hell? Yet we might prevent their fall by multiplying the number of those who would pray and offer themselves in sacrifice for their salvation.

We ought then to redouble our zeal in spreading and organizing in every place this Apostleship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and that our efforts may be more fruitful, we will beseech this Divine Heart to aid us with the all-powerful help of Its grace.

*The Morning Offering of the Apostleship.*

*O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer Thee the prayers, work, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.*

I offer them, in particular, for the spread and permanence of the work which has for its aim to give Thee as many apostles as there are Christians. O Jesus, increase in every class of society the number of these apostolic souls, who will aid Thee to

scatter over the earth the fire with which Thou desirest to see it enkindled. *Amen.*

[The Apostleship of Prayer, as organized and approved in the Church, is best known by the name of League of the Sacred Heart—the title chosen for it by Father Ramière and used in the briefs of the Sovereign Pontiffs (28 May, 1879, 24 August, 1884). It is not a confraternity or sodality, nor is it subject to the restrictions of such societies nor even included in any dispensation regarding their establishment. It is a “Pious Work” (*opus pium*), to which the mutual union of its members is an essential of its existence. It is on a canonical footing similar to that of the Propagation of the Faith—of which Pius IX. called it a sister-work—and of the Holy Childhood. It has a Cardinal Protector, who designates, with the special blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff, the General Intentions proposed to its united prayers. It is governed, subject to the approved Statutes and the decisions of the Sacred Roman Congregations, by a Director General nominated by the Father General of the Society of Jesus and confirmed by the Pope. In the different countries, he delegates Head or Central Directors, usually in connection with the *Messengers of the Sacred Heart*, the official periodical organ of the work; and these sign the diplomas of aggregation, of Local Directors and Promoters, in his name, and issue the necessary publications of the work and whatever other articles are connected with its approved working. The names of all Local Centres thus established are transmitted to the General Director each year. It has been forbidden by the Sacred Congregation that others than the Head Directors delegated for this purpose should print or give out the Certificates of Admission or the other publications of the work (24 May, 1867, 2 June, 1880). Also, the name Apostleship of Prayer cannot validly be joined with that of confraternities or other pious associations in their publications (7 June, 1879), nor has any confraternity of the

Sacred Heart or pious union or society of any kind ever enjoyed such a privilege, which would entail the destruction of the union of mutual prayer. The practice of the First Degree—the daily Morning Offering—is an essential condition for the gaining of the Indulgences or privileges, or for sharing in the Mutual Prayer, by the Associates. The Bands of the Second Degree are essential to the organization of the League in a Local Centre by the Promoters. Where religious communities become Centres of the League, it is necessary that each member should be admitted singly. These points are mentioned here to guard against a common misunderstanding; a full explanation of the very simple but effective working of the League is found in the authorized *Handbook*.]

## APPENDIX II.

(See Page 96-97.)

As the organized Apostleship of Prayer has gone on growing and developing itself under the hand of Providence, it has taken on more and more the character of a League of Mutual Prayer. This has brought it home to the hearts of many Christians, especially since the various *Messengers of the Sacred Heart* began publishing each month the reports of "Thanksgivings for Graces obtained," sent in by grateful Associates. This seems to render necessary some special explanation of what is meant by "answers to prayer." The teachings, not only of Christianity but of natural religion as well, declare the action of a particular Providence of God in answer to the prayers of His creatures. Many facts might be merely natural coincidences. Yet the eye of faith would see in them probable instances of the particular Providence with which God watches over all His rational creatures. It is this particular Providence we especially have a right to expect in answer to the prayers of ourselves or others. And when the Providence is so extraordinary as to be a direct answer to prayer, we are not therefore to call it a miracle; nor should any Christian, nor indeed anyone who believes in the good God, consider it as anything out of the usual line of His Providence.

This requires some brief explanation—first, of what the Providence of God means—then how this Providence works in the line of spiritual graces—and finally how all this differs from the miracle in the physical order and from extraordinary graces in the spiritual order.

Our Lord Himself has told us in a plain and simple manner in His parables, what the particular Providence of God over us is like. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the*



*very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore : better are you than many sparrows.*<sup>1</sup>

## I.

As we have said, natural religion teaches the truth in question. It belongs to the elementary belief in God that we should recognize His Fatherly Providence; otherwise all prayer becomes impossible. Moreover, if the answer to prayer were to be in all cases a miracle, prayer would present itself to the minds of most men as something presumptuous. For to miracles man never becomes accustomed, since indeed, in God's plan, they never become customary. It is this confusion between the idea of the miracle, which all Christians hold to be of rare occurrence, and the answer to prayer, which all who believe in God should hold to be an ordinary occurrence, that so many infidel writers have used to their own profit in recent controversy.<sup>2</sup>

In physical nature the regular movement of things forms an unbroken sequence of cause and effect, according to constant laws. Thus the lightning strikes in one place, and not in another, according to laws governing the discharge of the electricity which has been generated. But even in physical nature there is an activity, which cannot indeed interfere with these constant laws, but can seriously interfere with their application. This is not done by suspending their exercise, so that the electricity which had been generated from the clouds should not be discharged at all, but by directing the forces of nature. The agent of this direction is the free will of man, guided by his reason. He has discovered the use of the lightning-rod, and—no matter what the necessity of the laws of nature may be—by setting up his lightning-rod he can determine, in a certain degree, just how the electricity shall be discharged.

This is not a miracle. It is simply an instance of man's

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, x. 29-31.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Tyndall has furnished many notable examples.

free will, guided by his intelligence, directing natural forces. Every time that a man moves his arm through space or lifts a stone from the ground, he is interfering in this directive manner with the laws of nature. He cannot lift up the stone with any greater outlay of strength than he finds ready to his use in the muscles of his arm. In other words, he does not introduce any new force into nature; but his free will simply directs how these forces shall be applied, instead of leaving them to that unchanging physical order of cause and effect, which is instanced when the stone detached by wind and water rolls down the mountain side.

But man's free will is not the only agent which thus directs the forces of nature. When God created the world and placed rational creatures in it, the order of the universe was not limited to the action of the necessary laws of matter. God's Providence over His rational creatures came into play, not by a miracle, but as an ordinary every-day occurrence. In this way, simply out of His fatherly love of His creatures, God's free will, that is, His foreseeing Providence, directs the forces of nature in this way rather than another.

Thus it may happen that, through a simple disposition of natural causes, a man is released from some calamity because Providence has so disposed; whereas he would have been the victim of the calamity according to the physical relations of cause and effect in inanimate nature.

This, we repeat, is not a miracle. No new force is introduced among natural agents. Simply the application of natural forces is guided and applied by a free will, which is outside of material nature.

This Providence of God, we are bound to believe if we believe in God at all, is exercised even independently of prayer. For God does not throw into a universe of blind necessity His rational creatures endowed with free will, and then leave them to themselves. This is recognized by the human mind as soon as it recognizes the existence of God. And the first sign of

belief in God on the part of man is shown by his lifting up his soul to Him as to a Father, and demanding the help of His Providence by prayer.

In fact, the ordinary answer to prayer consists simply, so far as temporal favors are concerned, in this direction given to the things of time. Let us take as an example the case of a disease that, left to itself, might prove fatal. A skilful physician, using his free will guided by his skill and experience, would bring to bear such natural forces as would counteract the disease and restore the man to health. Providence might do the same, either of Itself or in answer to prayer, by giving the forces of nature a direction in one line of action rather than another.

## II.

When we come to consider the great light which Christianity has shed on God's Providence over man, we see how confidence in a particular Providence, as an ordinary and not a miraculous element of our life here below, is a part of our very religion.

Christianity tells us, indeed, that *God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.*<sup>3</sup> The fatherly love, therefore, which God has for us in the present order of things is entirely directed to the salvation of our souls. We are bound to believe that this Providence over us is an ordinary thing, giving us in answer to our prayers such temporal and spiritual favors as may be necessary to our salvation, and ever waiting upon us through all our path of life.

In the well-known case of a soldier whose life has been protected in battle by a medal of the Blessed Virgin, the result may be attributed simply to the natural coincidence of a bullet flattening itself against a metallic disc or medal, which the free will of a human being had sewed in the soldier's garments. It

<sup>3</sup> St. John, iii. 16.

may be also attributed, though of course without certainty (for the Providence of God is not a revelation) to the particular Providence of God, which in answer to the prayers of a devoted Christian—prayers which He has promised shall never be left unheard—watched carefully over the welfare of the soldier at the moment when his salvation was at stake. To consider it as a miracle or as something approaching the marvellous, and not rather belonging to the ordinary life of Christians, is to misunderstand the whole Christian idea of the relations of the soul with God its Father.

This will be still more clearly understood, if we show what God really does when he works a miracle, or when in the spiritual order He gives one of those extraordinary graces which are equivalent to miracles in the physical order.

In a miracle the forces of nature are simply suspended or superseded by God, Who is their absolute Master. The lightning actually strikes, for example, but does not injure. Or, again, the disease is evidently unto death, the body is already in dissolution, yet without the intervention of any natural remedy or any disposition of natural forces—suddenly and without any possible cause, except the will of the Creator—the person is restored to health. Such miracles may be asked for in prayer, and, all things considered, they are not infrequently obtained by Christians. But these miracles are never expected with that fulness of confidence which belongs to ordinary prayer.

So too with the souls of men. In His ordinary Providence, God has bound Himself to give every man having the use of reason certain actual graces. These graces enlighten his soul concerning the religious ideas he already has, and they attract his will to follow them. But if a person has no religious ideas at all and God should reveal definite ideas of religion to his mind, there would be an extraordinary operation quite like that of a miracle or a prophecy. It would be a true and supernatural

revelation. This we do not look for as an ordinary occurrence among men.

Yet the very first idea of prayer, as Cardinal Newman remarks in the example of the child that has grievously offended its parents and prays God to take away from their minds the sting and memory of the wrong, tells us what God's ordinary work in souls is like.<sup>4</sup> Without any extraordinary action God can change the state of mind of a human being, quite as much in an ordinary way as when a person of discretion changes the whole trend of thought and temper of another by giving good advice or useful information. If God did not in His Providence thus turn the minds of men, by bringing back to them what they already know and attracting their wills to what has already been presented to them as good, then the whole Christian idea of prayer would fail. When Christians pray, as they do constantly, for favors both temporal and spiritual, it is far from their minds that they are asking for anything extraordinary or miraculous. They are simply treating with God as their Father, in a manner perfectly analogous with that of the child treating with its parents here on earth.

It is unpleasant to recognize that the confusion of ideas so prevalent outside of the Church on this matter should sometimes have made its way even among intelligent Catholics.

From the beginning it has been in the special line of the Apostleship of Prayer, and of all its *Messengers of the Sacred Heart*, to renew among Christians that childlike confidence and easiness of communication with God which belongs to the life of faith. It is an essential part of the Apostleship of Prayer, to accustom souls to habits of prayer; and this part of its work has been blessed in explicit terms by the two last Sovereign Pontiffs. Its lesson for us is that we are to gird up our loins for the good fight, which will perhaps endure long, to prevent the introduction of the spirit and ideas of an unbelieving world among the children

<sup>4</sup> *Grammar of Assent*, on Conscience.

of the good God, Who answers their prayers because He is their Father Who is in heaven.

Leo XIII., in the remarkable Letters Apostolic with which, shortly after his coronation, he welcomed to his protection the Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer and, by name, the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, refers this indeed, not to the individual alone, but to prayers for all human society.

“To reach your end you endeavor to place before the eyes of the faithful the exhaustless riches of the charity of this Divine Heart. Thus they may gather new strength for the more earnest offering of all their prayers, so far as they are able, with the perpetual pleadings of that Most Sacred Heart, that through It they may finally obtain that which they desire and expect. We rejoice that your design has proved attractive to the piety of the faithful, and that your *Messengers* published in many languages have found you numberless readers. This will of necessity bring about the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and will strengthen faith and charity. It cannot but be fruitful for the salvation of the people. It will hasten the day of mercy.”



## INDEX.

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[This Index refers only to the main doctrinal topics and Scriptural texts developed at some length in the course of the work; it is supplemented by a few references to the very excellent treatment of the same subjects by the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. It is designed chiefly for the use of those who have to prepare instructions for others.]

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